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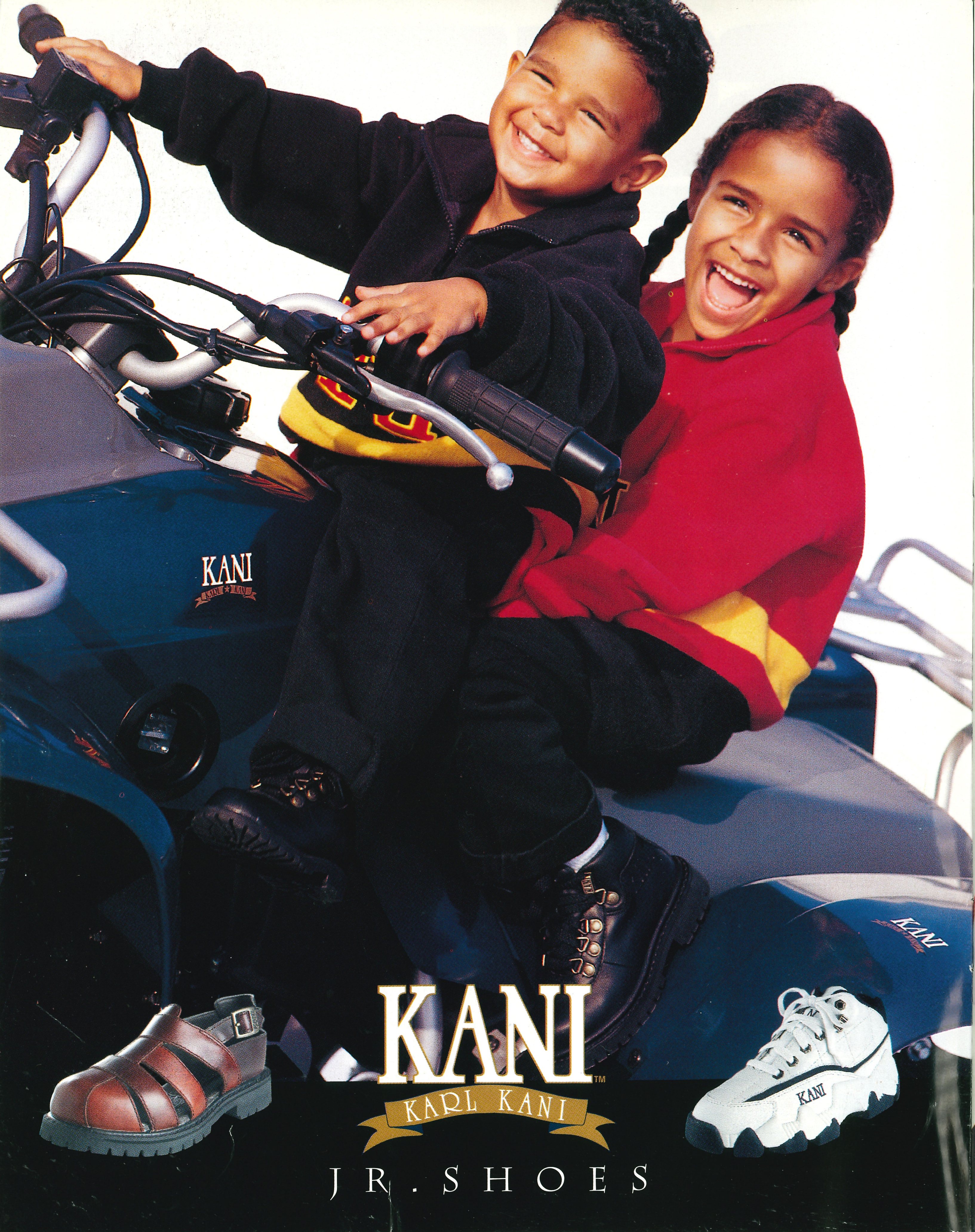
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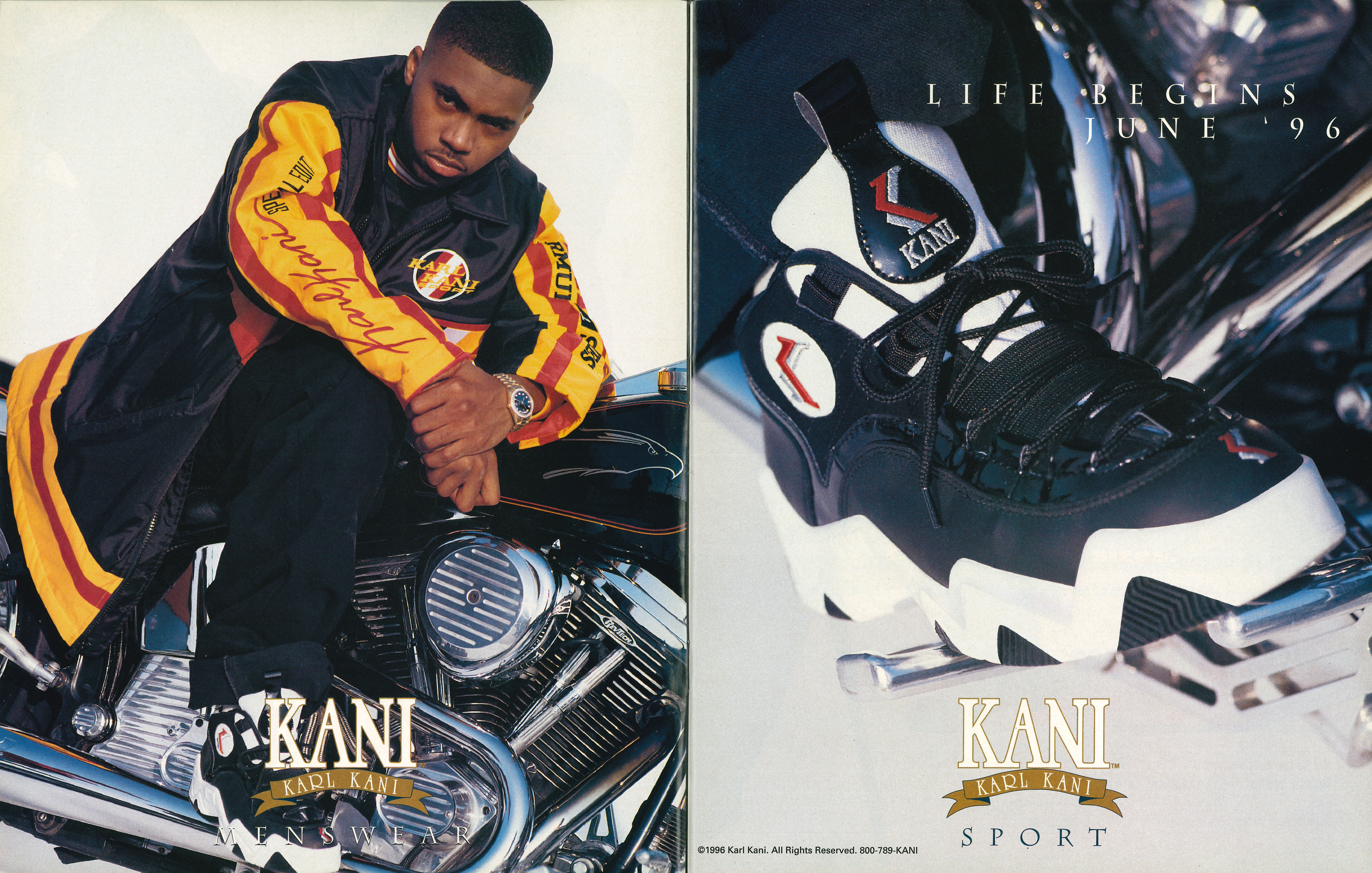
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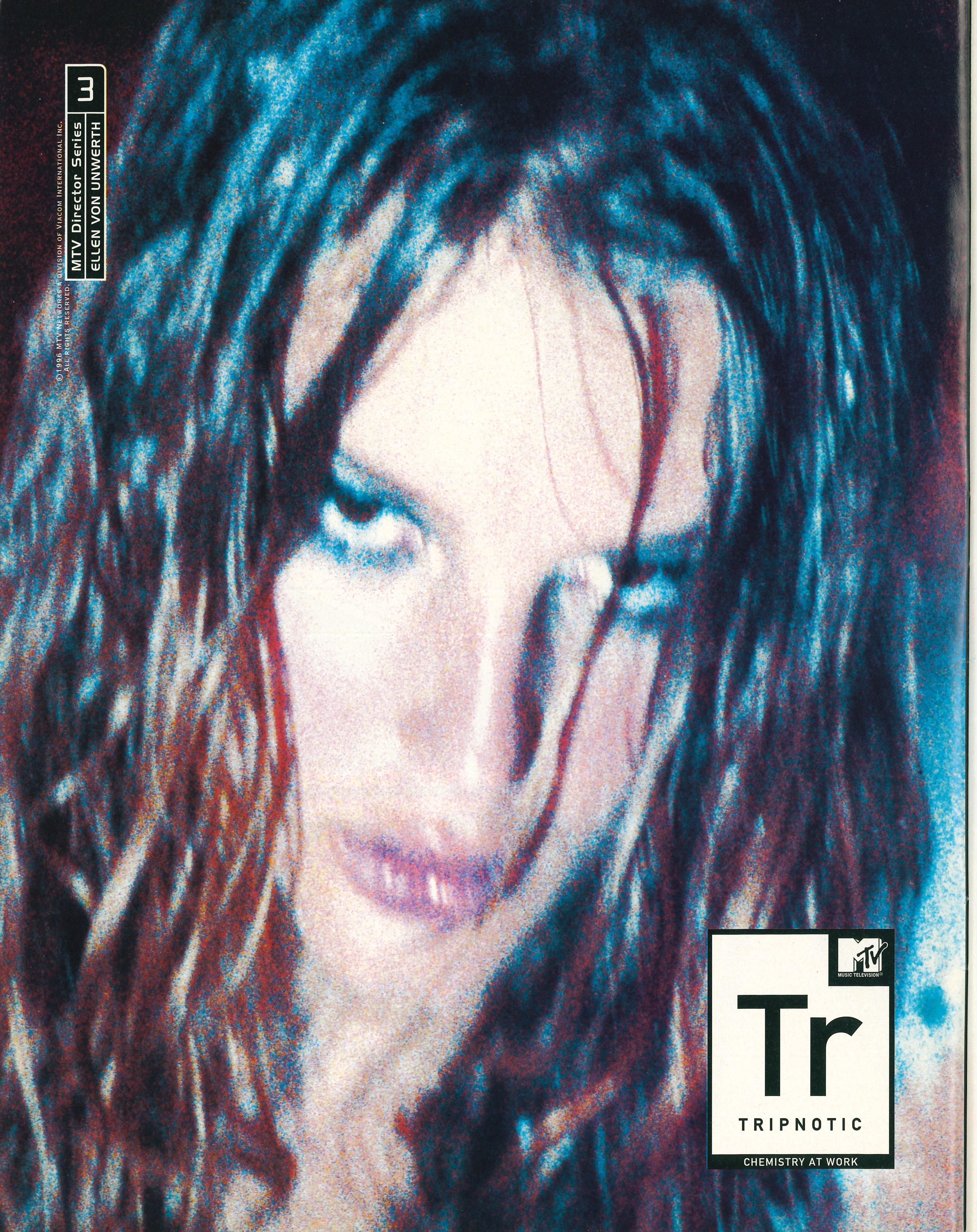

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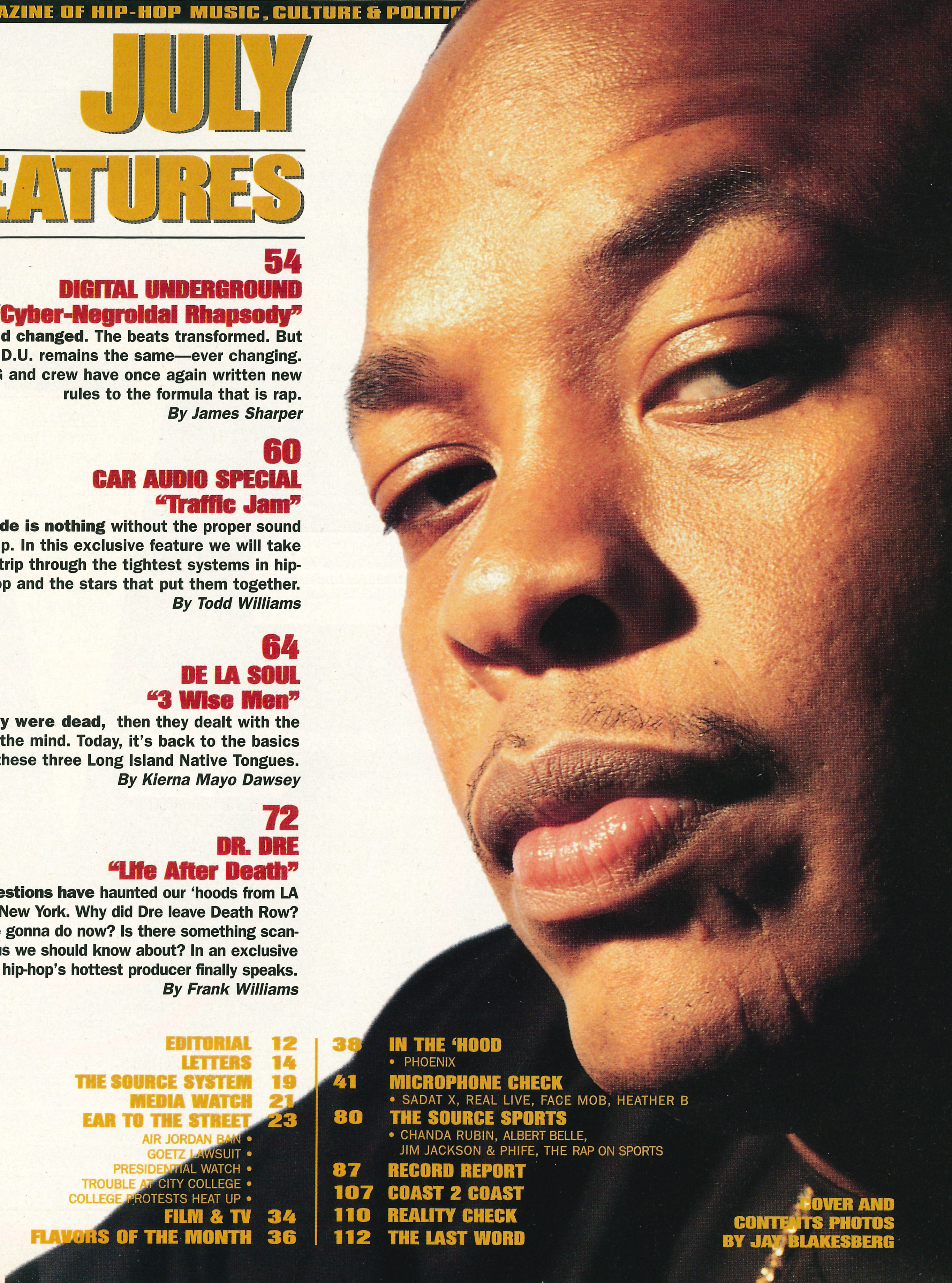

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BY JAY BLAKESBERG

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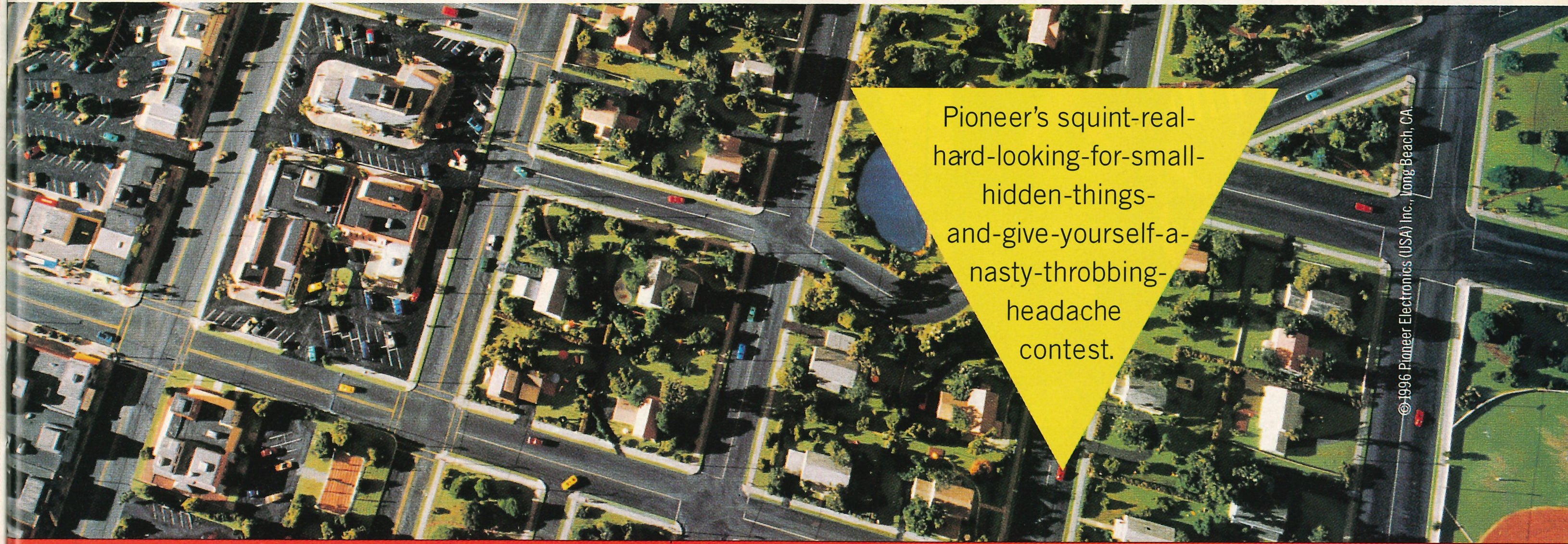
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THE SOURCE MIND SQUAD

NUMBER 82

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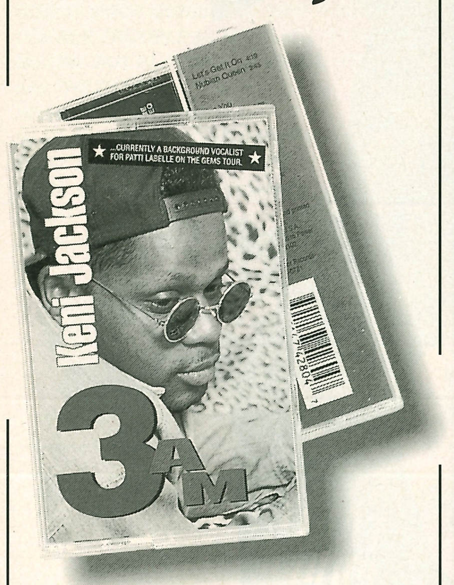
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EDITORIAL

MY COAST IS THE BEST COAST . . . BUT WHO CARES?

Here's a scenario. You're at a club. The music is bumpin' and the honeys are bangin'. Everybody's vibin' on the same groove which says that nothing matters but the here and now. There's electricity in the air. Suddenly, you hear a song that sends shivers from the tip of your baseball cap down to the laces on your Tims. It's the first time you've ever heard it, and you're lovin' it. The bass heavy beats rattle your bones, while the rapper rapid fires rhyme after rhyme in a dizzying swirl of poetry. It feels like an audio orgasm. You swear to yourself that you're going to buy the CD. Spending the remainder of the weekend looking for the CD, you finally find it, buy it and jet back home to listen to it. When you get home and stuff the CD into your rinky dink mini-stereo, however, you are greeted by nothing more than some jerk spitting out muffled rhymes on top of an overly hectic beat. It's the same song; artist is the same, rhymes are the same, beat is the same; but no audio orgasm. Luckily, the CD came with a smooth, Mr. Lover-type bonus track which has you whispering shit to your girl to get her open. You like it because you can relate to gamin' honeys. However, when you pump it in your car system for your boys, they frown, and in between shoving bullets into their clips, call you everything from ass to being a homo. Suddenly, you're faced with a number of questions: What happened to the first song? Did it change some how? And what was wrong with the second song? Was it wack simply because nobody got shot in the song?

The explanation is simple. In the world of physics, it is called the Principle of Relativity; for our purposes, we'll refer to it simply as Relativity. The world revolves around it. Briefly, what Relativity implies is that what a person may perceive as reality is completely dependent on that person's point of reference and differs accordingly. The point of reference can be anything from where you may live (e.g. Compton, Queens, up the block, or down the block), to the manner in which you live your life (e.g. gangster, lover, book worm, etc.). The Principle of Relativity is a principle addressing the diversity of human experiences. Nothing reflects the formation of opinions as art does. Art and life are intertwined like bodies in an orgy. For our purposes, art is music. Hip-hop music. As a whole, the entity represents a wide range of views and experiences which often clash, resulting in episodes like the current East coast/West coast war.

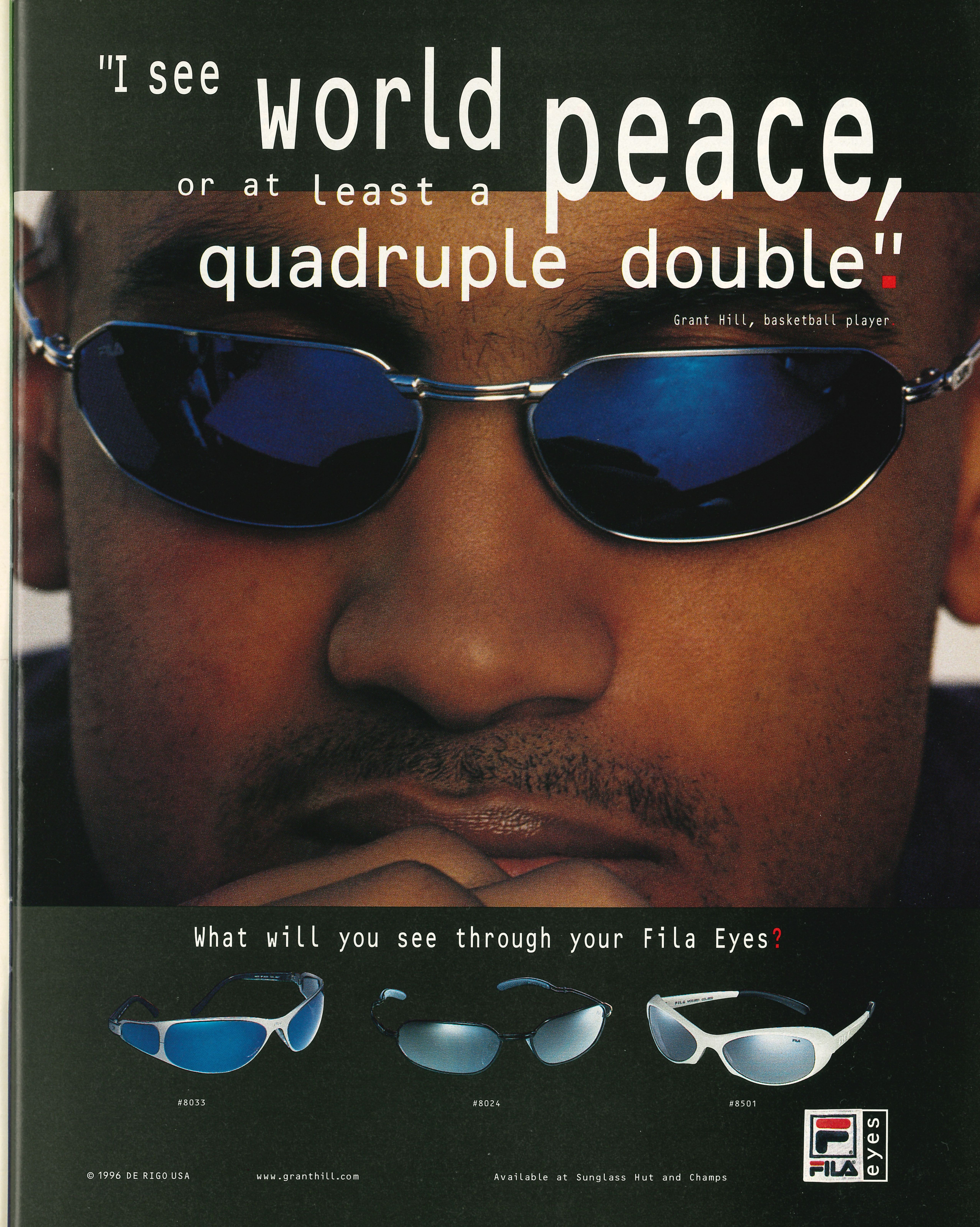
The realm of human experience is vast like Oprah Winfrey's bankroll, and as a result, the potential variations in both the style and subject matter of music are limitless. After all, music, like art in general, is a reflection of the artist's experiences. However, because of the variability of human experience, there will always be people who will not be able to relate to certain subjects and experiences for no other reason than the fact that it is completely foreign to them. The phenomenon of gang bangin' is a perfect example of this problem.

The experience of gang bangin' is a major driving force behind much of West coast music. As far back as I can recall, heads have been rhyming about Bloods, Crips and drive-by's, à la Ice-T's “Colors” in the mid-eighties. The reality of gang bangin' has reached the point of prevalence that even music videos are testaments to the scarring effect it has had. Shotguns and funerals have been incorporated into videos by artists such as Ice Cube and MC Eiht. Obviously, it plays a major role in West coast life and record sales have proven this to be true.

I, on the other hand, don't get the shit; never did, never plan to. The subject of drive-by's doesn't interest me because it doesn't concern me. It just ain't a major part of East coast life like it is on the other side. I do, however, accept the fact that it exists. This does not negate the validity of their experiences nor my own, but because of this disparity in experiences, I just can't vibe to most West coast tunes. Couple this with the fact that their laid back, “G” style beats tend to affect me the way a bottle of barbituates does, I gotta say that I just can't swing. But that's me. I do recognize that there are people, particularly on the West side, that think it's the bomb diggy. That's them. Everyone is entitled to their own likes and dislikes. There are more opinions in this world than pimples on an oily face. That's what makes people interesting.

The song discussed in the example at the beginning did not change, only the point of reference did. Liking a song that other people don't like doesn't make either camp wrong; it just makes everyone different. The Principle of Relativity. The entire East coast/West coast war is a question of Relativity. It is about recognizing the relative nature of people's tastes, opinions and experiences; and recognizing the old adage, “You don't have to agree with what I'm saying but you must respect my right to say it.” It is about exercising the maturity to understand. Sadly, both coasts have exhibited the maturity of a sperm cell. There should be no East coast/West coast tensions. But there are. There is too much ego and false pride involved. That's sad because too much ego leads only to ignorance and regression, rather than enlightenment and progression. Historically, ignorance has always led to the loss of human life. It still does.

MARC LANDAS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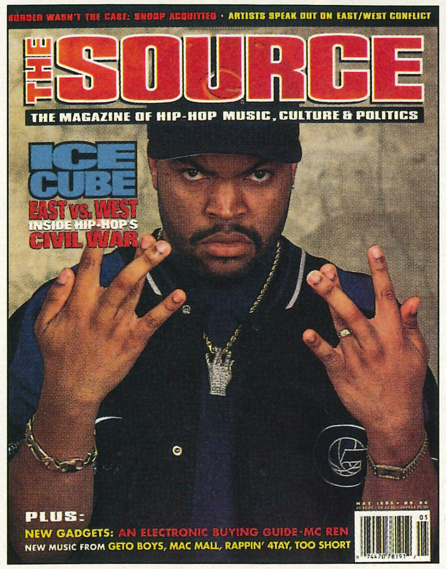
COAST BOASTS

I was just writing to say that this East coast/West coast bullshit needs to stop. Just last month I was reading The Source magazine ["Don of the Westside," May '96] with Ice Cube on the front cover. He was talking about when he went to a party in New York they played no West coast songs, just East. To me it is silly. If we are going to be in the rap game, we need to be in it together.

DAMIAN GAMBLE
Mobile, AL



MURDER WASN'T THE CASE: SNOOP ACQUITTED · ARTISTS SPEAK OUT ON EAST/WEST CONFLICT

THE SOURCE

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ICE CUBE

EAST vs. WEST

INSIDE HIP-HOP'S CIVIL WAR

PLUS:

NEW GADGETS: AN ELECTRONIC BUYING GUIDE-MC REN

NEW MUSIC FROM GETO BOYS, MAC MALL, RAPPIN' 4TAY, TOO SHORT

Okay, that's all good and well, East vs. West, something that needs to be talked about. Ice Cube represents the West coast and nobody represents the East coast. Ice Cube on the cover throwing up the "W" and nobody throwing up the "E"? All and all the article was good, but it would have been better if there was an article or even a panel told from the other side of the tree.

DARIAN WILSON
Santa Ana, CA

After reading Cube's interview in the May '96 issue I'm left wondering, probably right along with the rest of hip-hop world, exactly what the fuck is his beef? Here is one of the highest paid, well-known artists in the game whining about recognition. He complains about going to a club in New York and not hearing one single West coast track played. Then he goes on to whine about back room conversations about the East coast/West coast thing, but he doesn't name who is in these conversations, so isn't he as guilty as they are? Finally, he goes on to say that West coast rappers ain't getting their dues and that he has to take a stand. Dues?! If out-selling damn near all other cities combined ain't getting dues then what is? Besides, did the people out West appoint him their official spokesman?

THE K.O.N.
Riverdale, IL

This is in regards to your issue dealing with East coast/West coast rivalry. I must commend your effort in trying to squash this foolish squabbling currently ailing hip-hop. Ice Cube's analysis that West coast cats fail to get the credit they deserve for their outstanding records sales, initiative and support is totally correct. If East coast fans spent less time boasting about being the originators of hip-hop, then they might focus on manifesting keeping it real. In the same way Snoop deserved his four-time platinum record sales, Nas ought to have sold just as many units, bearing in mind that his lyrical contribution to rap has earned him a place in the hip-hop Hall of Fame.

However, Cube misses one fundamental point. West coast artists on the whole are still light years behind in terms of content, vocabulary and flow. With the exception of a handful of crews, most Cali artists rehash the same predictable bitch-bullet-blunt themes with clichéd, whiny g-funk beats. Elevating hip-hop isn't solely measured by record sales but by quality and content, which most West coast artists fail to have.

MATHEMATIK
Montreal, Canada

A message to the East and West: I don't care what set you represent. What borough you're from. What '70s song you sample. What Row you from. What block you on. What company you're with. What the name of your clique is. What city you got love for. Who's in your videos. Who has more glocks. Who's throwing down for what 'hood. What car you drive. How much money you got. Who stole your wife. Who shot you. What brand name you sportin'. Who you know. Where rap started. If you're wearing DKNY or if you're wearing red or blue. Whose city is the bomb. What you do in New York, New York or LA, LA. Whether you smoke chronic or weed. Who gets more airplay. How many heads respect or fear you. What section of town you can't ride through. What life crisis you came out of. If you a shook one. If you a stitch provider. If you're here to save us all. If you're underground or mainstream. If you're from the ghetto or from the hills. Who stole your style. If you did a soundtrack. If you used to deal. If you got mad bills to pay. How many friends you got on lock down. Who sells more records. How many remixes you do. How many hoochies you get for a video or how many shout outs you get on mix tapes. What I do care about is fat beats and who's making them. So stop all this East/West beef and make money off your music; not off the map!

LESLIE WING
Williamson, NY

I just finished reading your article on Ice Cube and felt propelled to respond about all this East coast/West coast stress. If you love hip-hop, you're gonna love any product put out that's tight. I love breakers, gangsters, taggers, beat makers and lyric creators. Hip-hop is life, you live that everyday. It isn't just in one part of the country, it's all over the world.

FAHIM AL-MATIN MAHDI
Green Bay, WI

I am appalled at how this "East vs. West" garbage has escalated to such dangerous proportions! What really made me both upset and scared is Ice Cube. How in the hell could he give a contradictory interview like that. He is the dopest thing on the West coast and should have better sense than to get caught up in that "my turf" shit! One minute you're dropping science, and the next you're saying stupid shit like, "it's gotta go down the way it's gotta go down." That kind of fiery rhetoric doesn't sound like you are down for a truce to me. You are a powerful voice that a lot of shorties out there look up to. If you keep giving these inflamatory articles boosting this foolishness further, you're going to implant this "my coast is best" shit into their heads, resulting in brothers from both coasts capping at each other for nothing.

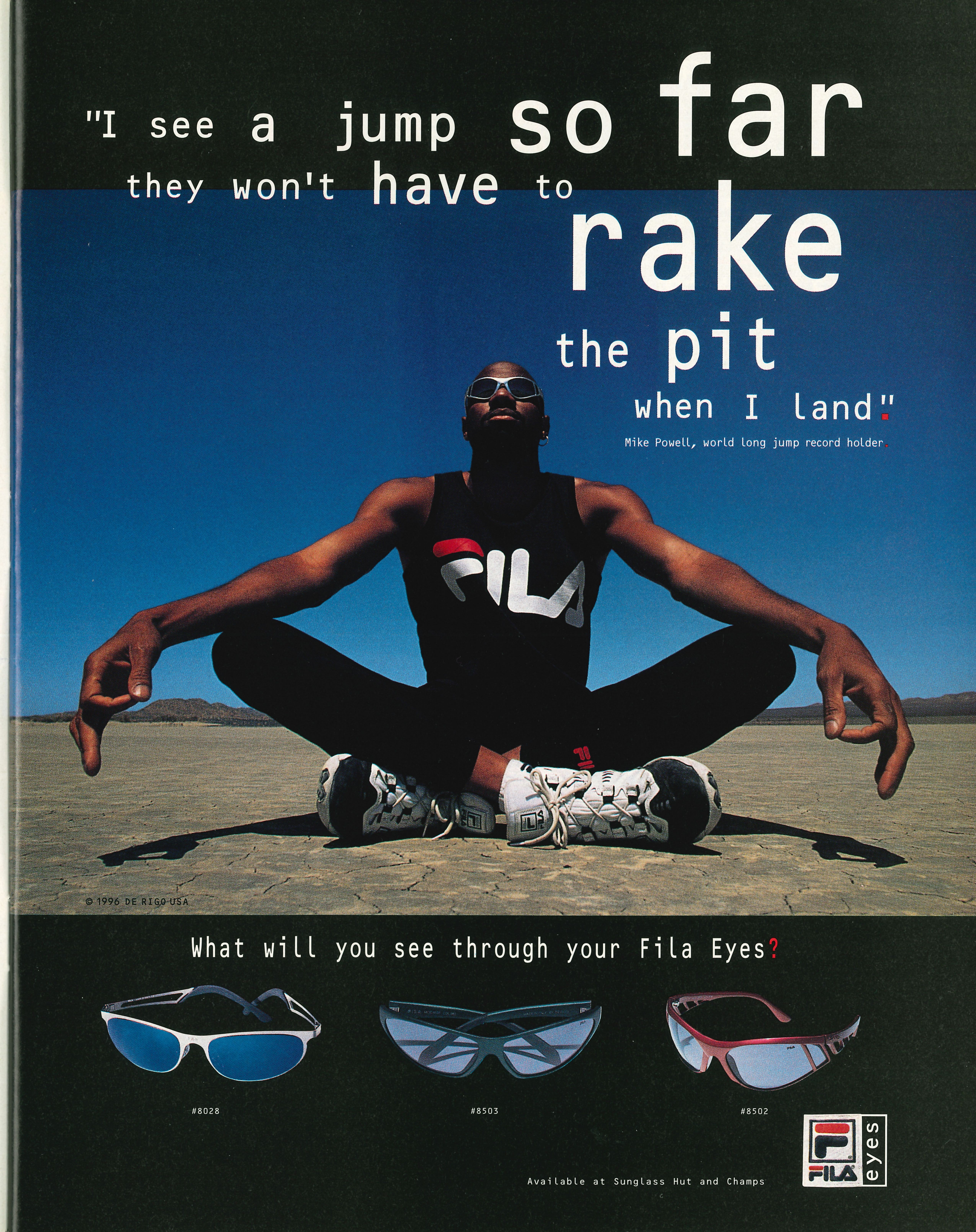
KING ISHMAEL
New York, NY

GOT YA ALL IN CHECK

Selwyn Seyfu Hinds, you have created a super Sci-Fi, hip-hop hero ["Rhyme Vortex," April '96]. It was both entertaining and educational, and it showcased your tremendous imagination and writing ability. As a Busta Rhymes fan, my only complaint is that the dreaded one only got two pages. There must be more to come, right?

SHARHONDA
Las Vegas, NV

Much love and respect to the beyond 2000 mental stimulators that your magazine highlights, such as the recent Busta Rhymes article by Selwyn Seyfu Hinds. The artistic and original skills used in writing the piece and giving us an insider's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view of Busta Rhymes' thought processes were definitely on that other level.

MARCEL "THE X-MAN" BOYCE
Lewisburg, PA

HIP-HOP'S LITTLEST BIG SECRET

This is in reference to your article about hip-hop music and how it is perceived in Toronto ["Underground's Final Frontier," May '96]. It is wonderful to read something about Toronto in an American magazine. Everything said in the article told the truth and nothing but. So I would like to send a big shout out of thanks to The Source magazine for letting Americans know that we in Toronto do have style.

MALESHA FARRELL
Toronto, Canada

Respect! You finally answered my prayers! An article in The Source about Toronto's hip-hop scene, mad respect. I've lived here most of my life and I've lived hip-hop to the fullest up north. The article was deep and should be followed up with some artist features. We are not New York or LA, but we can rock with the best of them. Respect for mentioning Baby Blue Sound Crew, they are straight up the baddest sound in Toronto.

JAI-O
Toronto, Canada

I feel very offended by your Toronto article. It portrayed such an ignorance of Canadian culture. I was born and raised in Toronto but now live in Vancouver. While living in Toronto for nineteen years I did not fully realize how supportive and diverse of a city it was culturally. Did you forget that Toronto hosts Caribana, the largest Black and Caribbean culture festival in North America, every year with pride! What is dangerous is that the article perpetuated ignorance, looked for the negatives and promoted that just for the sake of illustrating Canada's little underground.

LAURA JANE
Vancouver, Canada

THE 37TH CHAMBER

Every month I read your articles on everything from b-ball to football, hockey to baseball. Now a brother like me is waiting and wondering when you will do something on martial arts. Unlike the sports you already cover, there are two sides to martial arts. There's the traditional side, which is rich in history dating back to Nubia (Africa) thousands of years before our Asian brothers and sisters learned it and gave it many names and forms. Then there is the sport side, which embodies an energy that surpasses any sport out there. The art is the ultimate example of control, power and technique.

IBRAHIYM "GOLDEN TIGER" MASSAQUOI
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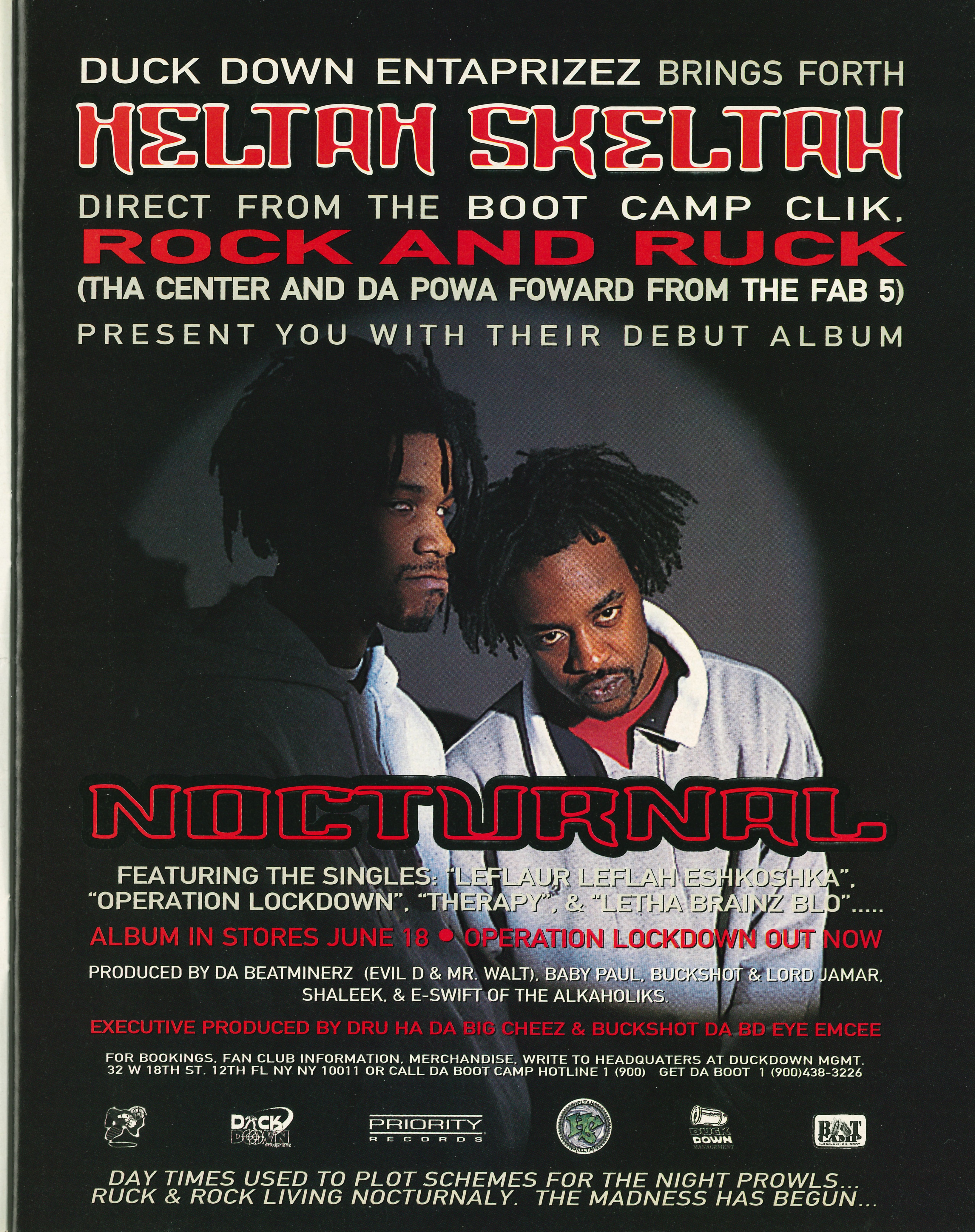

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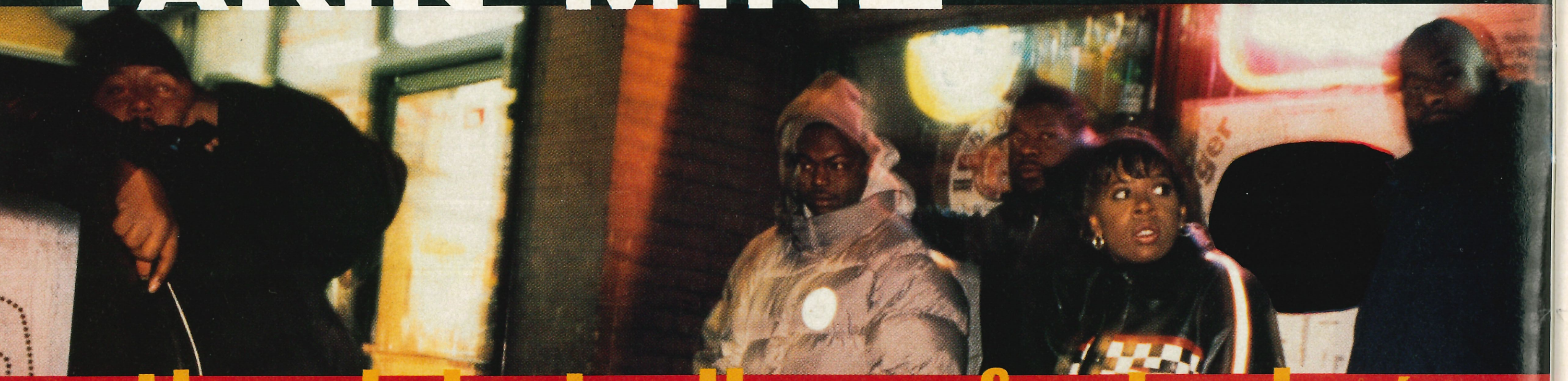

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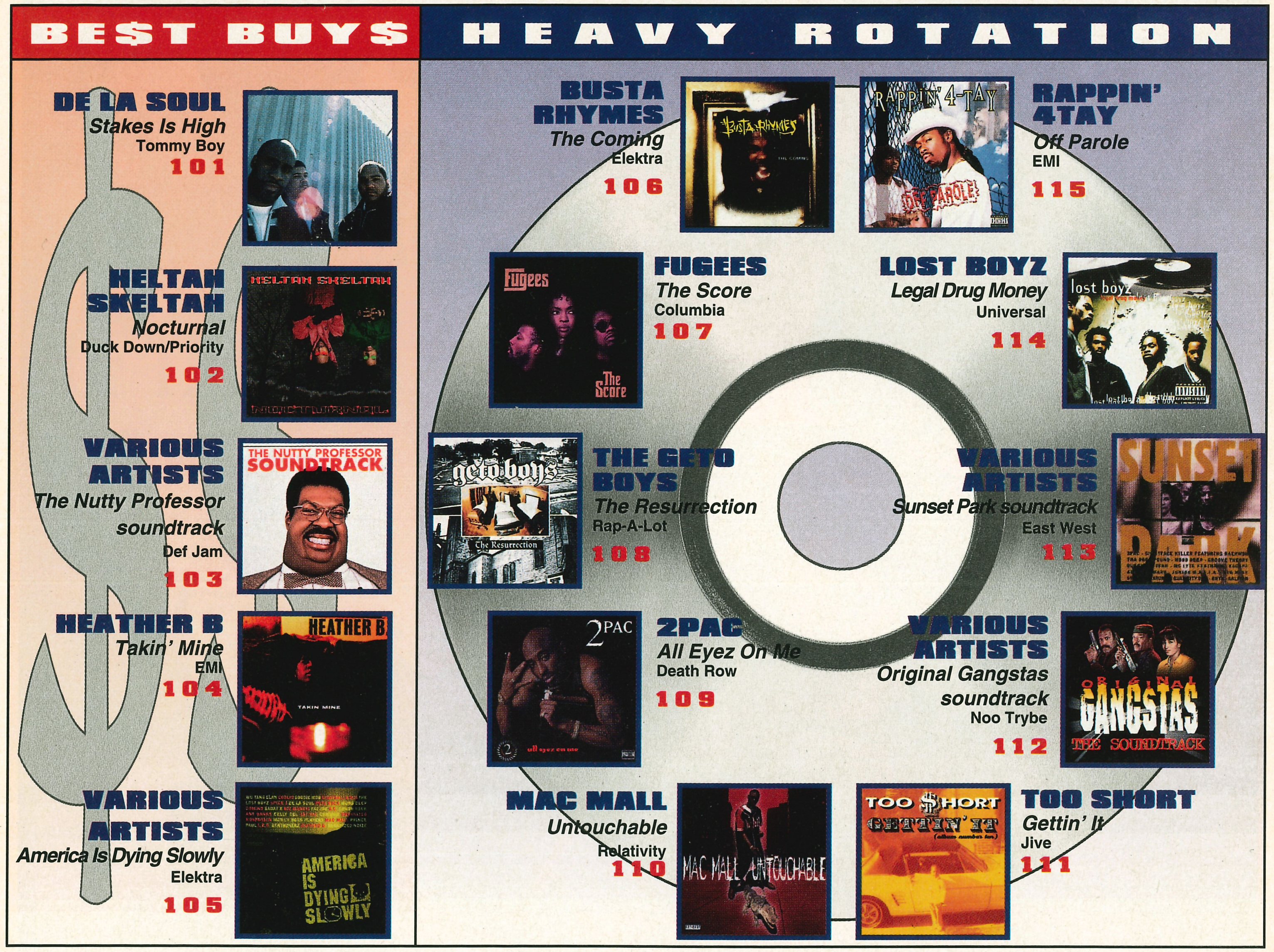

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Def Jam
103

HEATHER B
Takin' Mine
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104

VARIOUS ARTISTS
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BUSTA RHYMES
The Coming
Elektra
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107

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The Resurrection
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108

2PAC
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109

MAC MALL
Untouchable
Relativity
110

TOO SHORT
Gettin' It
Jive
111

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Original Gangstas soundtrack
Noo Trybe
112

VARIOUS ARTISTS
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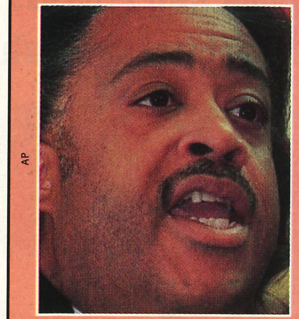
MEDIA WATCH

A Survey of the Mainstream Media's Coverage of Rap Music


AP

HIP-HOP IN AN ELECTION YEAR

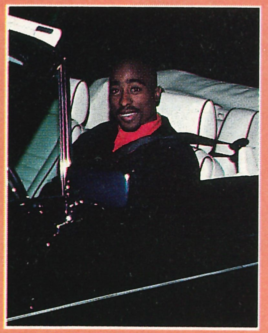
While in Detroit promoting his new autobiography, Go and Tell Pharaoh, the **Rev. Al Sharpton** issued a challenge to the Hip-Hop Generation. He told the *Detroit News* that there is a need for young people to understand past struggles and begin to take leadership roles in present political situations. "Every rapper is an activist," said Sharpton. "What are they active in? They've been making money for commercial enterprises. That's not an activist. The rappers were not at Howard Beach (a New York neighborhood where young whites attacked Blacks in 1986). They were not at Rodney King. Sammy Davis helped Martin Luther King. They call him a Tom. But Sammy Davis was an activist."

Well, Al, there are some things brewing. And if you were able to get tickets to see R. Kelly and L.L. Cool J on tour this year, you would have gotten more than just a little "bump and grind." Both are part of the **Hip-Hop Coalition for Political Power**, a year-old affiliate of the Rock the Vote organization, which plans to make an impact on this year's national elections. The Coalition's roster is deep, including L.L., Coolio, Method Man, Chuck D, Naughty by Nature, Warren G, Ice T, The Roots and others. In a *Washington Post* article, Nicole Duncan, who heads the coalition, said, "It's important to get everybody in the Hip-Hop Community out to vote because. . . we've got a lot to lose."

SPY
Rappers' Blue Chip Tips
CBS News:
Pamela Lee
SPY Rates The 50 States In Order of Annoyance
Give Me Liberty

FROM GLOCKS TO STOCKS?

I wonder where the mainstream media got the idea that hip-hop artists were idiots? Whatever the case, *Spy Magazine* took their cheap shots at rappers to an all-time low with their June issue, where they lauded "rappers' blue chip tips" in Johnathan Yevin's 7-page article "From Glocks to Stocks." The theme for the piece was that hardcore gangsta rappers had put down their guns and grimacing poses and picked up the Wall Street Journal and their around the way fortune teller to make the best investments possible with their crowd pleasing earnings. *Spy* put it this way: "Of all the arenas in which thuggish hooligans can exercise their street-brawling nastiness, perhaps the most overlooked is the rough-and-tumble world of finances and investments." Besides the fact that most of the targets on their hit list are hardly gangsta rappers (Chuck D, Domino, Das EFX, Doug E. Fresh), the underhanded interview tactics are the stuff that the National Enquirer is made of. An example of someone (who will remain nameless) caught with their mic on sounded like this: "Off course, know what I'm saying, came up here and, you know. . . spending mad dough is just really chump change anyway. Hundreds and maybe a couple of thousands. That's really chump change because niggas be trying to deal with six figures, seven figures, know what I mean?" Huh? Well if *Spy* really wants to keep it real, it would be interesting to see how well some of the high-fallutin' Hollywood types would respond to their financial investment questionnaire. Better yet, how many members of their editorial staff (or average citizens) are as deep into the stock market as they would have readers believe?


TRILOBITE

QUICKIES

If you live in the Los Angeles area, you may wanna start paying closer attention to the men who pick up the garbage from the sides of the freeways. **Tupac** was recently ordered to jail by a Los Angeles judge for 120 days (but is out pending appeal) for violating his probation because he did not show up for his mandatory community service—freeway clean-up. The idea that he would rather be locked up than alongside the highway is a blend of comedy and tragedy strange enough to report the matter. Equally as amusing are Hammer's remarks regarding his recent filing for bankruptcy protection. "It's time to close out old business and stop being the lottery for people who see Hammer as this big celebrity with a bottomless pit of dreams for people," Hammer told *Jet* magazine.

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Mona Lisa
"11-20-79"

higher education?

ethnic studies backlash kicks off student protest

Late in the evening on Monday, April 15th, a group of student activists at Columbia University reluctantly called an end to the five-day occupation of Hamilton Hall after administrators threatened to have them forcibly removed and expelled. The spontaneous sit-in began after negotiations ended abruptly between the student Committee on Ethnic Studies and the Core Curriculum (CESCC) and Columbia University administrators. As 250 students waited outside the meeting room, the lead negotiator for the University, Vice President David Cohen, announced that negotiations would end unless the crowd dispersed. The five-day standoff was on.

Despite the University's impressive Ivy League credentials, student activists believe that Columbia's core curriculum and departmental course offerings are far behind the times. The protest has two key dimensions. First, the CESCC students want to broaden the Core Curriculum, the required courses that all undergraduates must complete. The students contend that the existing course selection overemphasizes European history, culture and politics, while ignoring Latin America, Asia and Africa. Second, the students are calling for a department of Ethnic Studies with course work and faculty that would represent the contributions of Latinos, Asians, Africans and Native Americans to the development of the United States. However, the Ethnic Studies department they envision would go beyond ethnic cheerleading to analyze white world supremacy and the marginalization of people of color in American history.

"Intellectually there is no way they can beat us," said Orthniel Harris, a 20-year-old junior. "It's our world. We're the ones who have to live with our education." Columbia University sees things differently. And as a compromise, administrators promised to offer Asian and Latino courses within the American Studies department. Students contend that American Studies attempts to blur difference and ignores the particularly American context of the oppression of Latino, Asian, African and Native American peoples in the history of the United States.

AP PHOTO

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SAT-IN IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE THE SCHOOL'S CORE CURRICULUM MORE BALANCED

The five-day occupation of Hamilton Hall was proceeded by a two-day sit-in at the Low Memorial Library, which ended in the arrests of 22 students. Both sit-in demonstrations followed the lead of a hunger-strike by three Latino students that began more than a week earlier. Although student morale remains high, unfortunately, most of the activists agree that the University is not committed to establishing an Ethnic Studies department. According to Rafael Collazo, a 21-year-old senior and member of Accìon Boricua (a Puerto Rican empowerment student group), the University was more concerned about bad press than the issues.

When negotiating an end to the sit-in at Hamilton Hall, the University promised not to expel, suspend, delay graduation, or press charges against the student activists. However, following the students' cooperation, Columbia administrators issued censure notices to students identified as participants in the protests. Censured students are subject to a two-year probation period, with the stipulation that any future violation of University conduct regulations may result in expulsion or suspension. Administrators at Columbia University refused to comment on the student uprising and subsequent disciplinary actions. Despite the censures, the students' efforts continue. "The response from students on this campus has been amazing," Collazo said, following the 200-strong student rally that ended out the semester. "It's been a rainbow coalition of people supporting this struggle."

LEE COPELAND

NO PAIN, NO GAIN! HUNGER STRIKERS SET IT OFF

Instead of partaking in the usual April Fool's Day pranks typical of the college scene, three Latino students put their lives behind a cause. After exhausting all other avenues to demonstrate the urgency of their demands, 21-year-old senior Michael Maldonado, 23-year-old Marcel Ageros and 23-year-old graduate student Joaquin Ochoa began the hunger strike that set off a wave of student protests.

"Society views people of color so negatively," said Michael Maldonado. "What we were trying to do is bring our culture, our heritage, into academia. Not everyone has a chance to attend college. Those who do, should be exposed to the cultures and backgrounds of all peoples." The men pitched a tent near the Sun Dial, a highly trafficked area on Columbia's campus, where they spent the first 9 days of the hunger-strike. They moved into the Low Library and Hamilton Hall during the occupation of those buildings. The end to the 15-day hunger strike, consisting of a daily intake of water and electrolytes, coincided with the end to the final sit-in at Hamilton Hall.

The three men lost an average of 20 pounds. Another student, Heather Starr, ended her effort after suffering from a severe electrolyte imbalance and dehydration on the third day. After Starr's complications, the young men agreed to be visited by a doctor each day and began taking electrolytes (150 calorie solution of sodium and minerals). "I never experienced anything like it among the student community," said Ageros. "It was a conscious-raising and community-building event. Now the mechanisms are in place so that next year students can come back and make their case."

All of the hunger-strikers received censure notices. But according to Ochoa, all realized at the outset that they were making a personal sacrifice for the collective good. "Whenever people of color struggle for change, there are always repercussions. And whenever people of color want something acknowledged, there needs to be a catastrophe before people will listen."

LEE COPELAND

RARE AIR

IS IT REALLY THE SHOES?

When 15 students appeared at school one Monday morning wearing the latest of His Airness's footwear, Principal Daya Locke informed them that their shoes were in violation of the dress code. While kids across the country invest $135 and up to acquire the latest Michael Jordan sneakers, students at Calumet High School in Chicago will have to seek another means to rise high. Administrators at the school have placed the new red/black version of Air Jordans on their list because they believe the shoes are the latest fashion statement for local gangs.

To combat "gang-related problems" at Calumet, administrators have adopted a dress code that bans black, white and red colors. Oddly, these are the same colors worn by the three-time championship Chicago Bulls. "On the one hand, we know what public school systems are up against across the country, trying to combat the negative influences of gangs," said Nike manager for public relations, Erin Patton, who with mixed emotions agreed with administrators at Calumet. "In that respect, we support the schools. On the other hand, we recognize that there are positive youth in Chicago who utilize our products for their intended use." Patton fears that the prohibitive tactics at Calumet High School might backfire and hopes that administrators carefully explain their decision. Michael Jordan also expressed concern that his shoes were linked to negativity.

Although administrators at Calumet High School could not be reached for comment, Paul Vallas, CEO of Chicago's Public Schools, had this to say to students who found the dress code intolerable: "There are alternative schools for disruptive students that they may want to apply to."

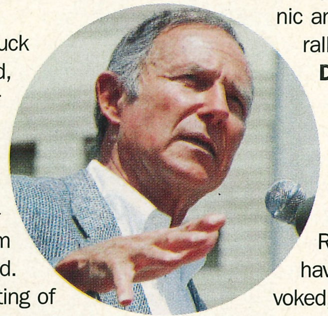
LEE COPELAND

california love

BEATING OF MEXICAN ILLEGALS DRAWS INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

California is quickly earning the reputation as the barometer for America's race relations. Continuing in the tradition of Rodney King's savage beating at the hands of LA's Finest and the controversial Proposition 187 (which would deny essential services to illegal aliens), several sheriff's deputies recently displayed what many worldwide have described as "excessive force" in apprehending several border crossers. Once again an embarrassing spotlight shines on institutional racism, police brutality and immigration laws in the U.S. However, it is not just a domestic affair. This time it's international.

After a wild, eighty mile chase, a rust-ridden blue pick-up truck carrying over nineteen illegal aliens slid to the side of the road, finally coming to a stop. As the passengers scrambled for safety, sheriff's deputies Tracy Watson and Kurt Franklin jumped from their squad car and descended on the final two would-be escapees. For fifteen seconds, the two deputies beat Enrique Funes Flores and Alicia Sotero Vasquez. In addition to the many baton blows, the deputies proceeded to slam Vasquez's head into the car—even after she was handcuffed.



AP PHOTO

With the incident captured on video by KCAL-TV, the beating of foreign citizens was broadcast all over the world, provoking cries of both disgust and anger from numerous countries, including Mexico. "The obvious abuse of authority demonstrated in this case confirms the urgent need to take firm action to eradicate discriminatory attitudes that lead to institutional violence," Mexico's foreign ministry said in an international statement, warning the United States that the beating could escalate international tensions. While scores of experts and politicians, including President Clinton, expressed their concern about the incident, denouncing the savageness exhibited by the deputies, some people refused to even acknowledge the brutality. Dan Swift, the president of the Riverside County Sheriff's Association, stood behind the officers. "We are 100% behind our deputies," said Swift, who organized a rally in honor of the two deputies. "All we have is fifteen seconds of videotape and a whole lot of excitement."

The rally was held in response to the many protests staged by ethnic and human rights groups. One of the guest speakers at the rally, which was attended by a mostly white crowd of 400, was **Daryl Gates,** former LA police chief, who stood by the officers charged with the beating of Rodney King. Already many parallels have been drawn between this incident and the Rodney King beating: the high speed chase; the excessive use of force; the race issue. Yet, the duration of the Flores and Vasquez beatings was significantly shorter than the Rodney King incident. While many politicians and civilians have suggested that the beating was excessive and was unprovoked, law enforcement officials like Swift stress that Flores and Vasquez resisted arrest throughout the chase.

The two victims are suing Riverside county for ten million dollars. Deputy Watson has also filed a lawsuit against the Sheriff's Dept., saying that he was coerced into writing a potentially self-incriminating report. Watson's lawsuit asks for financial damage and demands that his file be kept from investigators attempting to press criminal and civil rights charges against him.

MARC LANDAS

NO RE-RUN

CIVIL SUIT TURNS THE TABLE ON "SUBWAY VIGILANTE"

AP PHOTO

Twelve years after shooting four Black teenagers on a New York City subway, Bernhard Goetz, the then dubbed "subway vigilante," was recently ordered to pay $43 million in damages to Darrell Cabey, one of the youths he shot. The ruling was a striking reversal for Goetz, who was acquitted of attempted murder in 1987, when he was convicted only with illegally possessing a handgun and served merely eight months in jail.

Attributed to the existence of a more racially diverse jury, as well as Goetz's own testimony, the guilty verdict in this civil case, unlike the criminal case where Goetz did not take the stand, sent a message to the supremacist "vigilante" attitude of Goetz and his fans who reveled in his decision to get tough on crime by taking the law into his own hands. Goetz testified that he shot to kill because he didn't like one of the men's facial demeanor. "You made a decision to kill when you saw the shine in Troy Canty's eyes?" questioned Ronald Kuby, Cabey's attorney. "And the smile on his face," Goetz added. "It was that shine and that smile that set me off."

The then 36-year-old Goetz, now 48 and slightly graying, became a hero of sorts to many New Yorkers who were frustrated with high crime. According to Goetz, shortly after boarding the train he was confronted by the four Black teenagers who asked him for $5. Assuming he was about to be robbed, Goetz drew an unlicensed handgun and shot all four youth. Two of the youth were shot in the back. According to reports, as Darrell Cabey, the plaintiff in the civil case, lay on the ground, Goetz stood over him and said, "You don't look too bad. Here's another," and fired once more. Cabey, now 30, was left brain-damaged and paralyzed from the chest down after the shooting. The youths claim that they were panhandling.

In what some critics saw as a publicity stunt, Goetz received $20,000 for his defense from the Firearms Civil Rights Defense Fund, a legal group founded by the National Rifle Association that supports criminal and civil defendants who have used handguns in self-defense. "To us, this case is about his ability as a law-abiding American to defend himself from criminal attack," said Chip Walker, a spokesman for the NRA and the legal defense fund. The organization had also supported Goetz with $20,000 in the 1987 trial.

More a symbol of justice by the jury, than an actual expectation to pay the damages, the multi-million dollar ruling is unlikely to ever be paid. According to court papers, Goetz makes less than $20,000 a year, and under New York State law the court cannot take more than 10 percent of his wages over the next 20 years.

LATONYA KITTLES

SCHOLAR WARS

CITY COLLEGE GOES HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH LEONARD JEFFRIES

AP PHOTO

With a projected savings of $145,000 a year, the City College of New York recently announced that it would eliminate its Black Studies department, as well three other ethnic studies departments, and replace them with one general interdisciplinary program. The decision to downgrade Black Studies is something that Dr. Leonard Jeffries, professor of African Studies, feels more than partly responsible for.

The move, which comes about a year after the school removed Jeffries from his position as chairman of the department, has be been billed as an effort to rescue the financially troubled branch of the city university system. No tenured professors, including Jeffries, are expected to lose their jobs. School officials believe the new structure will open the school, its students and its faculty to more interaction with ethnic studies. The general ethnic studies program would not have departmental status, which means it probably would not have the authority to hire new faculty members.

Interviewed just prior to a vote of the University board of trustees, Jeffries said the vote is virtually a formality, and the whole issue is nothing but a charade. He said the move had already received the blessing of Yolanda Moses, the president of City College. He believes that the decision is the latest salvo in City College's war on Len Jeffries in particular and Black Studies in general. "I will still be there regardless of what they do," Jeffries said defiantly. "I'm tenured and I'm the most prominent professor on the campus." Several professors in and outside of the Black Studies department agreed that the Jeffries controversy ignited the decision.

In 1992, Jeffries brought suit against the college for his removal as chairman of its Black Studies Department. Over the next two years Jeffries fought the decision in court. His lawsuit, which sought $400,000 in damages, looked to re-install Jeffries in his chairman position and challenged his removal as a violation of his constitutional right to free speech. He won the suit in US District Court, but the decision was overturned in a court of appeals. Jeffries was allowed to finish his term and keep his chairmanship until the spring semester of 1995.

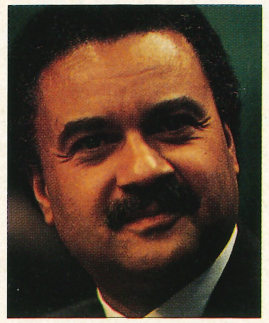
Jeffries initially came under attack after a speech he gave in Albany in 1991 criticizing Jewish influence over negative portrayals of Blacks in Hollywood and Jewish involvement in the slave trade. The controversy over the 59-year-old African scholar's speech placed the college in the national spotlight. Although he claims harassment from the college since 1989, five years later, during the height of controversy, the school began offering more African-American classes outside of the Black Studies Department.

Unshaken by what he sees as the tip of the iceberg in the attack on Black Studies at colleges and universities across the country, Jeffries' voice flickers with soaring optimism when he talks of the future. Regardless of what happens at City College, Jeffries is taking the battle to a global terrain. He is currently creating a community education program ("The African Communiversity") on the Internet that will transmit the findings of Black scholars worldwide. He envisions instructors participating from the U.S., South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Europe. "This [Black Studies] can never be a departmental enterprise of a college," Jeffries said. "It's a world industry."

STEVE WALKER

ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

THE RON BROWN FACTOR


JAMES COLBURN

Who will be the most influential African American figure in the upcoming presidential elections? Minister Louis Farrakhan, Colin Powell—if he chooses to run alongside GOP nominee Bob Dole—or Ronald H. Brown? Powell remains elusive. Farrakhan is still perceived as an outsider. Yet, it is no secret that President Clinton found Ron Brown essential to his election bid in 1992. Although Ron Brown died tragically in April, he may become essential to the Democratic bid in 1996 and may find himself center stage at the Democratic Convention in July.

While the economy, as a matter of course, becomes a walk on a tight rope for almost any incumbent presidential candidate, it could become a cake walk for Bill Clinton. No doubt, when it comes time to debate the economy, Bill Clinton's campaign strategists will resurrect Ron Brown. What will be their points of reference? American business was good under Ron Brown. U.S. investments were up in Eastern Europe under Brown. There were more business opportunities for Blacks and other minorities under Brown. Over the past three years, Brown made 15 trade missions to more than 25 countries, including South Africa, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia and China. On these missions—which secured $80 billion worth of contracts for U.S. goods and services—he was usually accompanied by top executives from more than 200 companies.

President Clinton is not the only one who will call upon the memory of Ron Brown, however. Always one to place tragedies in their proper perspective, Reverend Jesse Jackson recently attacked Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, suggesting that they insulted African Americans by not attending Brown's funeral. Bryant Gumbel also made comments in an NBC interview with Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel that no Republicans had expressed condolences. (Actually, Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour had sent condolences the day of the ill-fated trip.) Where will Bob Dole (who introduced a proposal to eliminate the Commerce Department, attacking Brown) turn when, in the economic debates, Clinton refers to Brown?

Ron Brown was the first African American U.S. Secretary of Commerce. He was also the first African American to head the Democratic National Committee. Is a vote for Bill Clinton a vote for Ron Brown? If the Clinton team can convince Black voters to accept this theme, Ron Brown could once again be the key to a Clinton election.

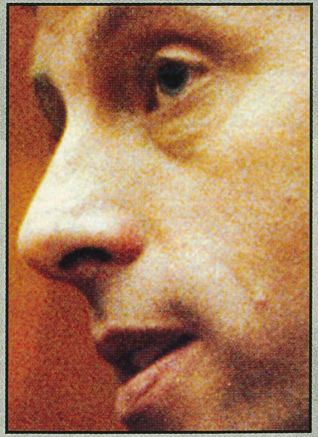
LARVESTER GAITHER

WORD...LIFE

BY SHERRYLL ATKINS

where is the LOVE?

Between the O.J./Furman fiasco, Rodney King explosion and countless other non-publicized police brutality incidents, the LAPD is having a difficult time re-acquiring the public trust they think they once had. In an effort to repair damage, LAPD Police Chief Willie Williams has put into motion a goodwill campaign. The campaign has been kickstarted by displaying approximately 100 billboards and bus ads in Los Angeles. These billboards, provided by a local advertising agency, proclaim positive messages such as, "Ending Violence, Ending Fear" and, "Together We Can Make It Happen." They also feature pictures of police officers with children.

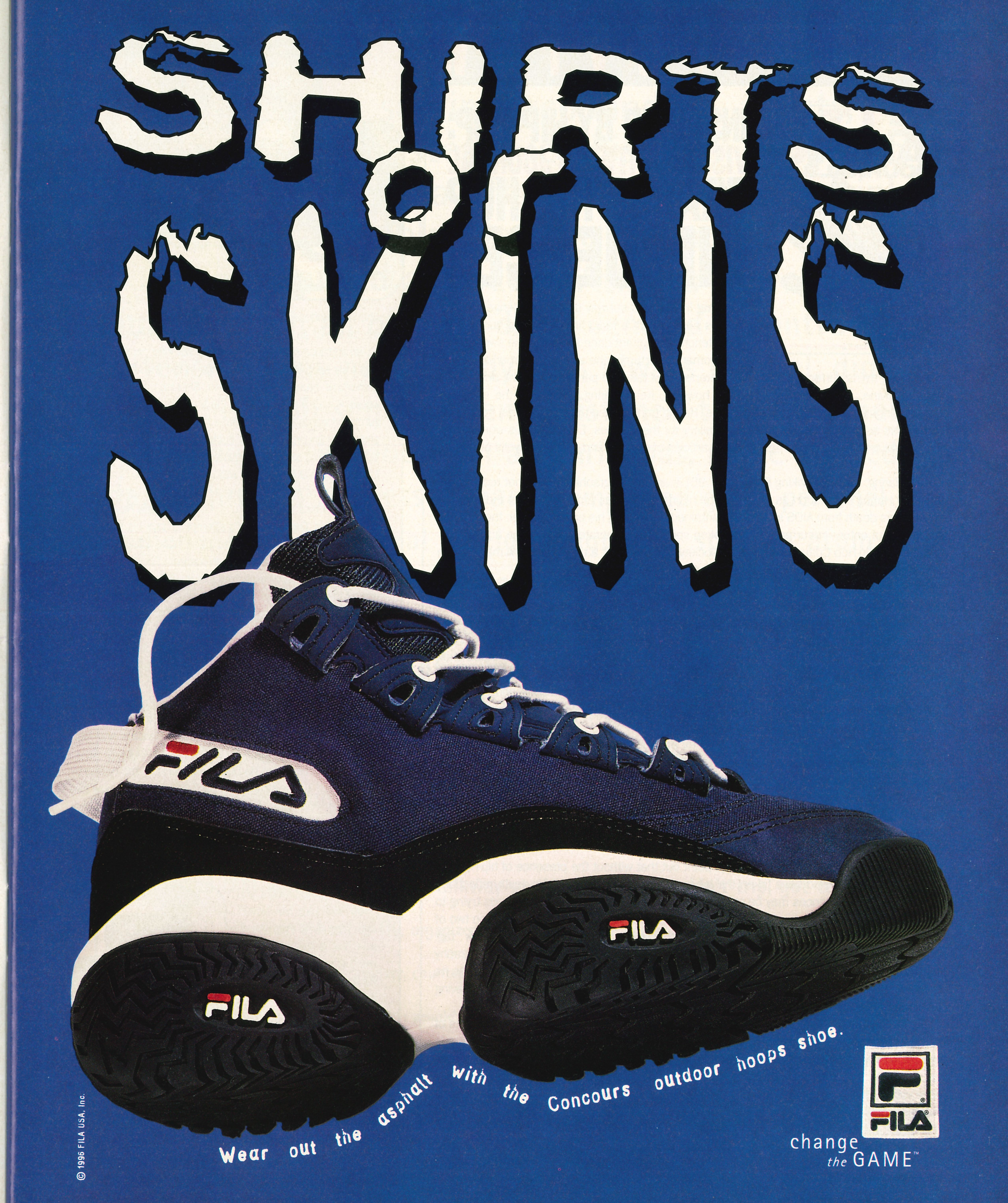

AP PHOTO

The billboard donation was largely due to the generosity of co-owner Glenn Sagon of the Glenn-Phior advertising agency. Sagon, whose donation is worth an estimated $500,000, said he was "concerned that one or two incidents were giving the impression that the Police Department wasn't a positive force and that's not true. These are only a few isolated incidents."

To clown and say Sagon's favorite hobby is performing jury duty in Simi Valley is to cover up the deeper problem. His sincerity is obvious by his actions. He and millions like him think that King and Furman were really isolated incidents. When they do not live in predominantly ethnic areas where police harassment runs rampant, how can it be explained to them that pictures of cops with kids will not assuage the pain and suffering inflicted by those who swore an oath to protect and serve? That's like expecting an American kid to lose sleep over the plight of the children in Bosnia or starvation in Somalia. We can't really feel for them like we could if we were there being bombed or feenin' for a crumb. Distance dulls empathy. However, Sagon and others are fellow Americans who live around the corner (West Coast) or are a subway ride away (East Coast) from ghetto USA. They have no excuse for sleeping on our situation or our point of view. Moreover, one can be so ignorant of a situation taking place so close to home only if one chooses to be ignorant, the same as anyone who claims they don't know some form of abuse is taking place inside their home. How can the willfully misguided be helped to see what is going on between police and the ethnic peoples of their community, especially if they really don't want to know?

Willams said that his campaign will counter negative impressions some people have of the LAPD. During a news conference in Los Angeles, Willams went on to say that, "The campaign gives the officers an opportunity to say, 'Here we are. We want to work with you to make your life better and your neighborhood better.'" Police Commission Vice President Art Mattox hopes the campaign will help with police morale, citing the need to support the police and the hard work they do.

It would help our community's morale to think that help is on the way at the sound of sirens instead of fearing for our lives or the lives of our loved ones. We'd like to be able to trust the police, but experience is indelible. Billboards with positive messages will not cause us to be moved towards improving relations, especially in a city where billboards are so prevalent that we're oblivious to most of them. Personally, I'd rather someone refrain from hurting me in the first place rather than apologize for it later, no matter how big the apology. What would help improve relations is if they make as much of an effort to stop abusing and harassing us as they have at launching the campaign. Of course most of the materials for their campaign were given to them free of charge. Our trust does not come that cheaply, especially where mistrust has been so deeply rooted. S



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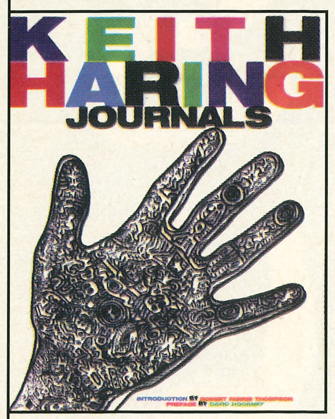
book review



INSPIRED BY HIP-HOP: VISUAL ARTIST'S JOURNAL TRACES HIP HOP INFLUENCES

Stepping into a NYC subway station challenges a commuter's senses with a rapid fire of battling stimuli. The sour stench of stagnant urine strangles the sweet smell of a woman's perfume; the apocalyptic roar of halting and passing trains suffocates the lonely serenades of talented panhandlers. The destructive over the divine. During the early 1980s, however, Keith Haring challenged the subway's coarse monotony and commercial tackiness. Haring transformed the subway train into a platform for his art and a huge vanguard art gallery for the masses. Eventually, his work moved from subways to "established" galleries, to articles of clothing and countless walls all around the world.

Keith Haring: Journals (Viking Press, $27.95) is an autobiographical diary that records the details of Haring's evolution as an artist and his maturation as a person—from the mid-seventies to his death from AIDS in 1990. Maintained throughout his artistic career, the detailed and insightful entries resurrect an outspoken voice that celebrated the unique artistic contributions of Hip-Hop Culture to the "high society" art world (at a time when few mainstream artists knew the difference between grassroots arts and vandalism).

Keith Haring originally hailed from Reading, Pennsylvania, but did most of his artistic training in New York City. As a student at The School of Visual Arts, Haring acquainted himself with the technical aspects of his craft. His informal education consisted of SoHo art galleries, late night parties and politicking with the art world's elite. As his style became more distinctive, his fame increased considerably. His faceless, monochrome, bubble shaped characters bent, twisted and danced around the world as he received commission after commission. His massive murals decorated the outer walls of Italian churches and crumbling walls in ghettos from Barcelona, Spain to the Lower East Side of Manhattan; he even put in a 300-foot long touch-up of the Berlin Wall.

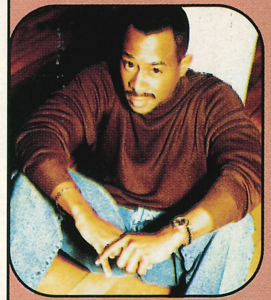
In *Journals*, Haring explains the intentions for his paintings and sculptures in great detail. He makes it clear that bringing art to the masses was always one of his main concerns. His exploitation of the subway system, in a manner similar to the graffiti artists with whom he often collaborated, was as much an attempt to expose the common person to art as it was a search for a cheap forum to show off his work. He strongly believed that the educated art elite should not be the only ones capable of viewing a work of art. According to Haring, art's function is not to alienate, but rather, to enlighten.

Throughout the book, Haring is quick to point out that without the presence of hip-hop culture, his art never would have taken the innovative direction it did. His in-depth reflections on these hip-hop influences may be most interesting and valuable to hip-hop heads trying to expand their insights into this boundless culture. Most of Haring's remarks center on two of hip-hop's often overlooked forms: graffiti art and breakdancing. He viewed "writing" or "tagging" as the closest thing the Western world has come to developing a distinct calligraphy like the Eastern world. Captivated by breakdancing's ability to push the human body to its flexible limits, his paintings attempted to capture a breakdancer's dynamic mobility—having his figures twist and twirl like an animated Rocksteady Crew.

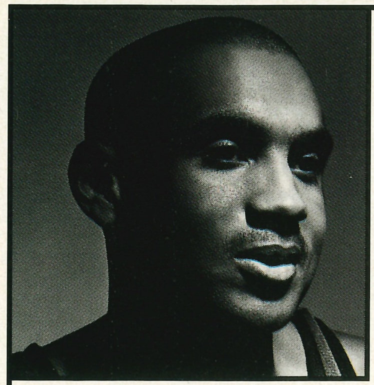
Like most journals, this one is written in many different places and times. It has spurts of daily entries and at times sporadic, abstract notes. (For example, not a solitary entry is made throughout the entire year he was diagnosed as HIV positive.) Of course, Haring had other matters to attend to and his goal was not to write an autobiography. But, the obvious gaps may leave you feeling like you've trudged through a 500-page mystery novel only to find the last chapter torn out. As a traditional "book," *Journals* doesn't work. But, as a glimpse into the life of an artist inspired by hip-hop, who gave us an anti-drug campaign ("Crack is Wack"), an AIDS awareness campaign ("Silence=Death") and much more, *Journals* remains a must-buy.

MARC LANDAS

bits & pieces



The vast and ever changing world of entertainment continues to grow stranger every day. On May 8, under the springtime glow of a Wednesday afternoon Los Angeles sun, television sitcom comedian and feature film star **Martin Lawrence** briefly lost his mind. According to witnesses, Lawrence was in the middle of getting his car washed when he suddenly started talking to himself while walking into the middle of an intersection. Witnesses confirm that it wasn't an instance of Marty just getting his joke on, the brother was truly speaking to himself while in the midst of delirium. Authorities brought Lawrence to Sherman Oaks Hospital where it was discovered that he was armed with a loaded gun. Afterwards he was released to the care of his private physician. According to his doctor, Lawrence was suffering from a seizure as well as severe dehydration. As of this writing the local D.A.'s office was in the process of deciding whether or not to press charges on Lawrence's gun possession. Waaaasss uuuup????. . . •A recent *Daily News* report revealed that **Tupac Shakur's** attempt to have his sex abuse conviction vacated was denied by a state Supreme Court judge. The basis of the appeal stems from Shakur's defense attorney, who claims that prosecutors failed to reveal that one of the officers who arrested Shakur had previously been suspended for off-duty misconduct. The judge, Daniel Fitzgerald, ruled that the suspension was irrelevant. What happens with Tupac's impending prison term for a parole violation in Cali remains to be seen. . . •The resilient fixture of New York rap's underground business community, **Dante Ross**, has signed a lucrative new label distribution deal with the multi-mogul **Russell Simmons** (Def Jam). Responsible for much of the early success of Wild Pitch Records and later Elektra (KMD, Pete Rock & CL Smooth, Brand Nubian), Ross' new label will be called **No Doubt** and will start the ruckus by playing host to the soundtrack for Eddie Murphy's new film The Nutty Professor. Next up, **Trigga The Gambler**, best known for his incredible lyric acrobatics on his brother's (Smoothe Da Hustler) "Broken Language" single. . . •Everybody's talkin'! This time it's (are you ready for this?) **Kool Moe Dee**. That's right. The man who brought you "How You Like Me Now?" and "The Wild Wild West" now has a talk show. Not weird enough? Okay, **Matty Rich** (Straight Outta Brooklyn) will be producing the show for Buena Vista Television. Stay tuned to your local listings to find out just how ill and MC can get when given an entire talk show. . . •Speaking of the old school, Tuff City Records has just released a bevy of underground old school gems that are sure to bring back memories and maybe even spark a couple of new ones. Included in the collections are classic works by **The Ultramagnetic MCs**, **Davy DMX**, **DJ Hollywood** and **The Cold Crush Brothers**. Ⓢ



This year Grant Hill led his team in scoring, rebounding, assists, and steals, led his team back into the playoffs, led the league in triple doubles, led the league in All-Star balloting, earned a place in Atlanta this summer, didn't punch an official, didn't demand a contract extension, was never tardy, was always cordial, didn't dump his high school friends, listened to his mother, remembered the doorman at Christmas, made his bed daily, threw a successful party, employed great personal hygiene, learned several foreign languages, split an atom, penned a novel, directed a play, composed a symphony, led a marching band, joined the Peace Corps, discovered a new kind of plastic, learned the art of mime, solved an unsolved mystery, recycled, ate more vegetables, got in touch with his feminine side, saved a tree, didn't litter, spit, speed, jaywalk or trample his neighbor's begonias, gave blood, remembered to put down the seat, remembered the Alamo, promised to take shorter showers in an effort to conserve water, got plenty of sleep, finally fixed that loose brick in the walkway so the mailman wouldn't trip, got to the bottom of it all, didn't hurt a fly, organized his thoughts, chose paper over plastic, appeared fully clothed in most interviews, improved his vocabulary, counted his blessings, rewound tapes before returning them, said nice things about his teammates, fed coins into other people's meters, kept his thermostat at 68, practiced what he preached, actually paid attention to the stewardess' emergency flight instructions, donated a kidney, and vowed to do better next year.

Congratulations Grant

FILA

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TEXT BY CHINO/BYI

ATTENTION ALL GRAF HEADS

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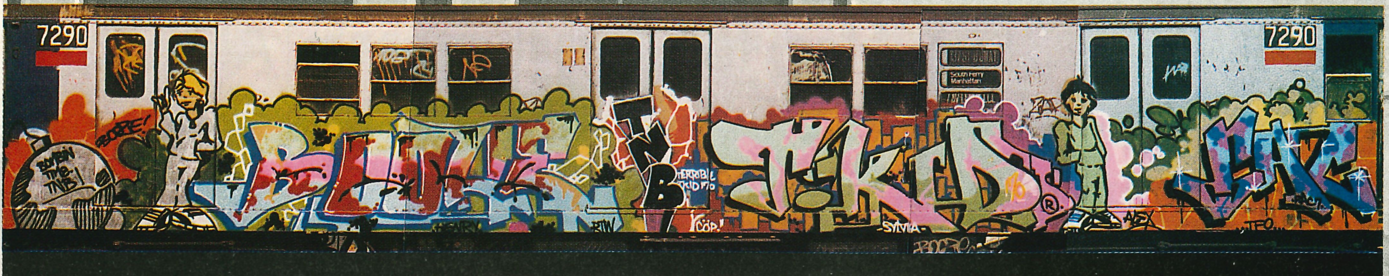
THE MAN BEHIND THE SPRAY CAN, T-KID 170, IN ACTION AT THE GHOST YARD, 1984

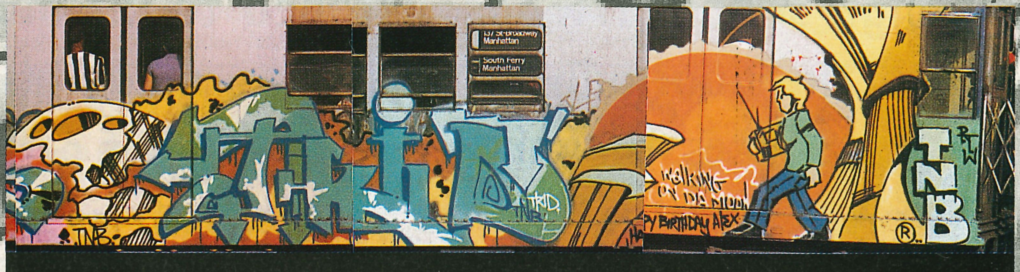
PHOTO CREDITS:
T-KID TNB

THANKS TO:
JAYSON/TERROR 161

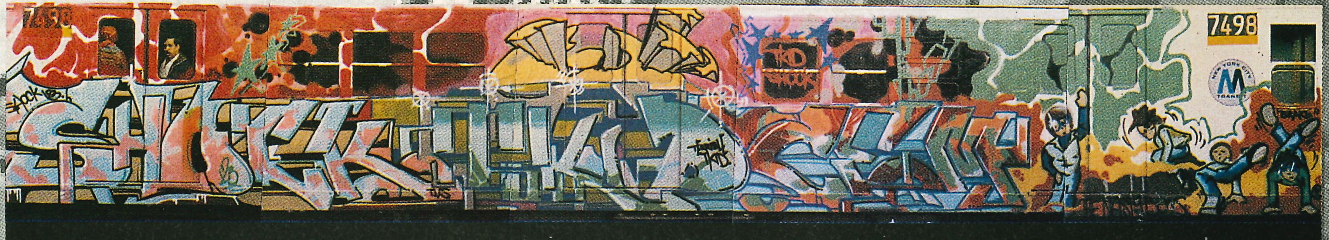
T-KID SHOUTS:
THE TNB CREW, YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE... MY SISTER "DIANNA" IN CHICAGO, MOST OF ALL "POP," YOU LIVE IN MY LIFE FOREVER.



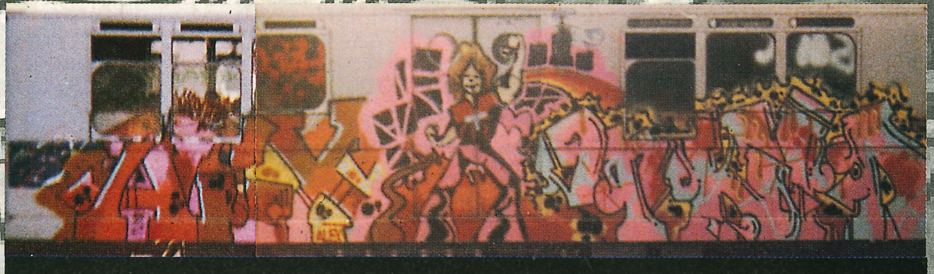
BOOZER, T-KID 170 & RAC 7, #1 LINE, 1984



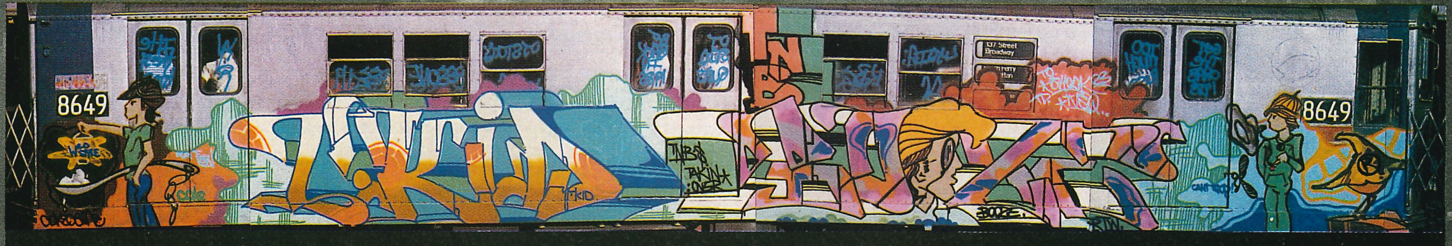
WALKING ON THE MOON, 1/2 OF A BOOZE/T-KID CAR, #1 LINE, 1984



SHOCK 123 TUS (THE VAMP SQUAD), T-KID & CEM^{TAC}, TOP TO BOTTOM WHOLE CAR, #6 LINE, 1985



ALEX & T-KID, #1 LINE, 1975



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CHARACTA ASSASSINZ

Fayetteville, North Carolina is perhaps best known for Fort Bragg, home of the US Army's 82nd Airborne, as well as the Special Operations Alpha and Delta detachments. As such, Fayetteville's a fitting staging area for a group of highly trained, elite mc's—Characta Assassinz.

Quite frankly, these guys are the most impressive group of unsigned cats that I've heard all year. Comparisons to the Wu are going to be inevitable; not because of the Assasinz' style, but because the six man crew—S.R.D., Rik Marvel, Demented, X-Style, Kenetix and J-Rock—are actually individual acts and they switch around their line-up on each jam. Many crews have tried to follow the Wu's multi-part unit approach, but most of 'em come off like poor Shaolin imitations. The Assasinz escape that fate 'cause they've got they're own, well defined identity—something most unsigned crews lack.

This crew lives on one thing: lyrical destruction. That Assasinz moniker isn't there just 'cause it sounds cool; steppin' in the way of their verbals is a quick way to get that knot flown. The production—by Two Labmonkeez—is almost as impressive (and that's no diss to the beatcrafters, them kids is just nice on the mic): a collection of ill beats and moody textures that give the Assasinz the perfect springboard, particularly "Feelinz" and "Undecypherable." I'll leave you with a morsel, from Rik Marvel on "Feelinz": "Lyrics with spirit/ Mind eruptions from the volcano/ spits insane flows for hooded crooks and braided-hair niggas with faded gang clothes/ Smoking like Chernobyl/ Assault Marvel it turns to thermal-inferno."

SELWYN SEYFU HINDS

Each month in this column, we profile a talented group or artist who has yet to sign a deal. Send top quality demo tapes with a description of the contents, a black-and-white photo and contact info to:

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"BOW DOWN"
ICE CUBE, WC, MACK 10
PRIORITY

"WHO'S THE CHAMPION"
GHOSTFACE W/RZA (GREAT WHITE HYPE SDTRK.)
EPIC

"PILLOW"
RICHIE RICH (NUTTY PROFESSOR SDTRK.)
DEF JAM

"THE RAP WORLD"
PETE ROCK & LARGE PROF. (HIGH SCHOOL HIGH SDTRK.)
BIG BEAT

"STREET DREAMS"
NAS
COLUMBIA

"LISTEN TO ME NOW"
8BALL & MJG (AMERICA'S DYING SDTRK.)
ELEKTRA

"WILD COWBOYS"
SADAT X
LOUD

"U CAN'T SEE ME"
MC BREED W/ERICK SERMON
ICHIBAN

"DECISIONS"
ORGANIZED KONFUSION (AMERICA'S DYING SDTRK.)
ELEKTRA

"THE TURNAROUND"
REAL LIVE
BIG BEAT

"ILLEGAL BUSINESS"
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PENALTY

"MY CREW CAN'T GO FOR THAT"
TRIGGA (NUTTY PROFESSOR SDTRK.)
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The lieutenant from the reservoir
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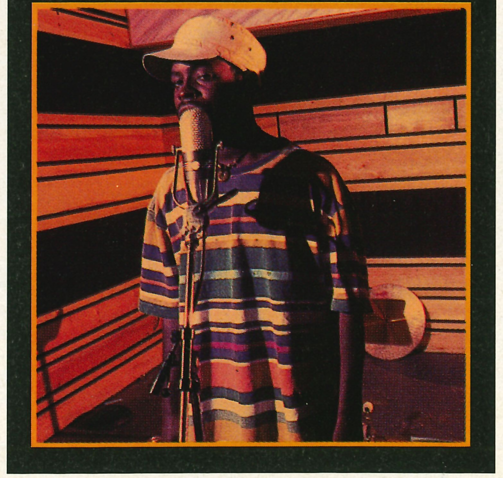
I send mc's where the paramedics are
At first I'm like, "Nah"
I'm nonchalant from afar
Then strike to cut the fake rap star jugular
With irregular balance of the cat burgla-rar
Known to par-lay with Gar-cia Vega cigars
I know the flavor because me
And the thugs' minds are mutual
We congruent
Lay on the corner with the trauma unit
I'm from the lab where the bomb's distributed
So never try to duplicate the skills executed
Son you'd get electrocuted
from the worldwide reputed
Shine like nickel heat that blow your mind
When I shoot it
Some know me as the man
that's from The Roots crew
Others as the bad lieutenant of Snyder Avenue
We go an eye for an eye
Behead like a samurai that'll command the Dy-
Nasty until he die
Who will imply that I lack abiliti
Make your words known
Amplify the u-tiliti
I'm crooked like the eye on a toxic malt liquor
The land whipper
The Dom Perignon champ sipper
The phipha bring it all together
Like the zipper on a butter leather
The bad lieu a bring the bad weather
So to whoever got riff let it rest
Reflect then recollect on the way it was set
It's the veteran architect that flows
With the rhythm of sex
Be on the low shotgun in the Lex
With my man low to flex
I'm restin' where they handle the Tecs
And the lyrical vandal is next to flow
So my man my mizza my man
M-illitant what's the master plan?

BLACK THOUGHT of THE ROOTS, from "Sections"



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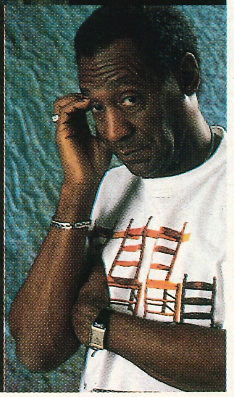
OLD THEMES DIE HARD

THE NEW FACE OF THIS FALL'S TELEVISION LINE-UP LOOKS TO BE RIFE WITH CONFUSION

BY SHERRYL ATKINS

Remember "The White Shadow?" Resurrected via Nick at Nite re-runs, "Shadow" is the perfect example of a dope show made irritating by its underlying theme of the white savior saving us po' cuh-led folk. Throughout the years this theme has consistently re-surfaced in various forms.

"The Show" was snatched off the air; Bill Cosby is the only Black man with enough clout to receive fair treatment.



TOP: KASSA/FOX; BOTTOM: GENE MARTIN/RETNA

Fox Television's recent contribution to this theme is displayed in their newest effort, "The Show." The premise of this program is that the narcissistic star of the Wilson Lee show (played by Mystro Clark), hires white writer Tom Delaney (played by Sam Seder) as his new head writer without informing his other writers, all of whom are Black. Wilson Lee is supposed to be a young Black comedian, on the cutting edge. Yet, he goes outside of his current writing staff which is comprised of other young Black edge-cutters and hires a comedy writer who used to write for Jay Leno!? Each episode focuses on Wilson getting into scrapes and going to the white head writer to get him out. Tom is allowed to hire a flunky white writer to "watch his back." On his first day, Tom's little friend feels threatened by the "Shaft" and "Superfly" posters he sees hanging in the office hallways. Shortly thereafter, he is threatened by Wilson's uninteresting crew, whose only intimidating characteristics are that they are Black and male. Adding more insult to injury is Big Chewy (played by dude who plays "Bru' man from the 5th flow'" on "Martin"). In general, anything Big Chewy does is funny. However, Big Chew's mangling of the English language compared to Tom's consistent noun/verb agreement, makes Chew look like an uneducated boob. Since most of Chew's dialogue is exchanged with Tom, this point is made painfully clear several times per episode. Last, but not least, what's up with the wardrobe? Marcia Brady would yak if she was forced to dress like Denise (played by T'Keyah Crystal Kemah of "In Living Color"). That ever-present sport headband/turban on non-descript posse member #1 needs removal so we can see who else isn't funny.

In spite of the "The Show's" problems, Mystro Clark still manages to come off, so it's a bet we'll see him in another space and time soon enough. All "The Show" really needs is to be re-worked. If the white guys were replaced by other minorities with the same characteristics, it would relieve the "White Knows Best" undercurrent. As of this moment, "The Show" has been snatched off the air, not for re-working, but for burial.

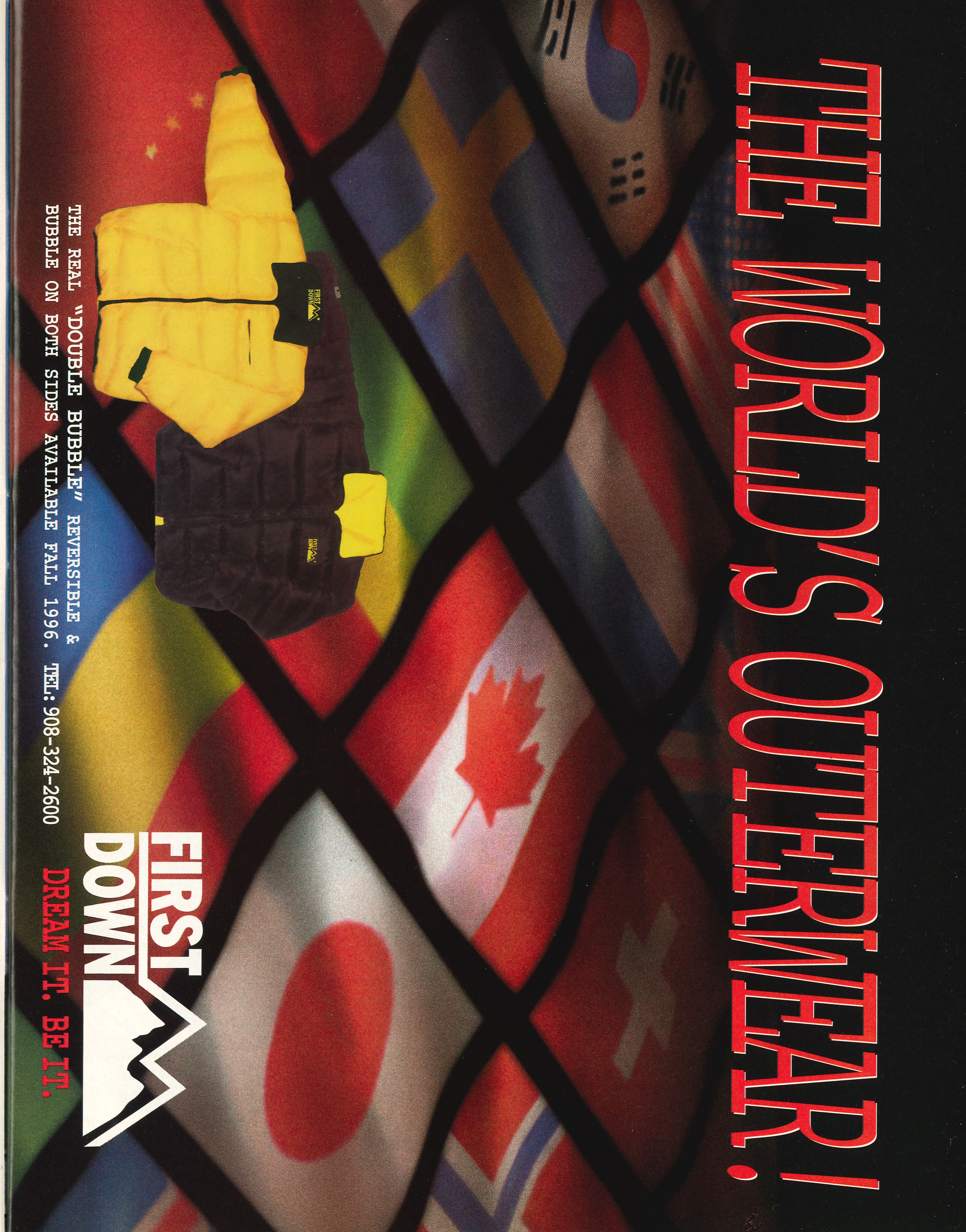
This brings up the next point. Bad white shows are allowed to be bad for several months before receiving the Sandman treatment, while Black shows are yanked immediately, never to be seen again. "Party of Five" had ratings lower than Jodeci's post concert pants and Fox kept it on until it started to do well. "The Preston Episodes," starring David Alan Grier, was removed so quickly, most of us barely remember it ever existed. (It was terrible, but no worse than the other stuff on TV.) "Under one Roof," starring James Earl Jones, Joe Morton and Vanessa Bell Calloway, was quality television at its best. CBS aired it upon the request of several viewers, but canceled it shortly thereafter, not giving it time to build a following. If a show isn't rating well, it is a candidate for reworking. It is extremely expensive to produce a pilot and no production company wants to start fresh if it can re-work a program that's already been made. Yet Black shows are rarely given a second chance or a good first chance. Bill Cosby is the only Black man with enough clout to receive fair treatment. His last show, "The Cosby Mysteries," flopped. (Who could believe Lynn Whitfield would want to get with him or Martin Lawrence for that matter?) His newest project has gone through many changes because Cos didn't like any of the ideas his writers were coming up with. Thus far, the idea for Cosby's show is that he is a regular working guy prematurely retired by his company. Now he is at home driving his wife (played by Phylicia Rashad, his wife on "The Cosby Show") crazy. If this one doesn't work, Cosby will probably try something else with his name in the title. We should all have it like Cos. He's the only brother with enough dough and enough guts to make a serious bid for ownership of the peacock, a.k.a. NBC, which came this close to having its name changed to the Negro Broadcasting Company. It's your world, Mr. Cosby.

Fueled by the success of the film, the pilot for *Dangerous Minds* has been made, featuring Coolio and a cameo by Da Brat. Instead of Michelle Pfieffer, the teacher is played by Annie Potts (from "Designing Women" and those Jiffy Popcorn commercials). Good box office insures imitation, thus we now also have *The Substitute*, a new movie so close to the *Dangerous Minds* formula it looks like a twisted sequel.

Trying to make a show more palatable to white viewers by making a white protagonist the hero and problem-fixer of all other characters of non-white status is the incorrect route to viewing harmony. Putting Black people in roles of eunuchs, buffoons, impoverished saints, or expendable thugs won't work either. What would work is portraying us in the most shocking and least acceptable roles for Black actors in Hollywood: regular people. They'd be surprised at how many of us fit the bill.

Coming Attractions

Gregory Hines is coming out with a project, starring **Eddie Griffin** and **Malcolm Jamal Warner** as the new odd couple. . . **Laura Petty** of "Tank Girl" and **Karyn Parsons** of "The Fresh Prince" are scheduled to star in "The Lush Life," about an opinionated artist (Pretty) and an irresponsible newly-divorce actress (Parsons). ...Then there's the aesthetically correct "Between Brothers," starring **Allen Payne**, **Dondre Whitfield** ("The Crew," "All My Children," "The Cosby Show"—he played Robert, Vanessa's first boyfriend) and **Tommy Davidson.** Allen and Dondre are the brothers and Tommy is the friend. Two foines plus one funny equals mass appeal. To give these shows the good ratings needed for a season pick-up, be sure to watch them the first time they air, ok? Ⓢ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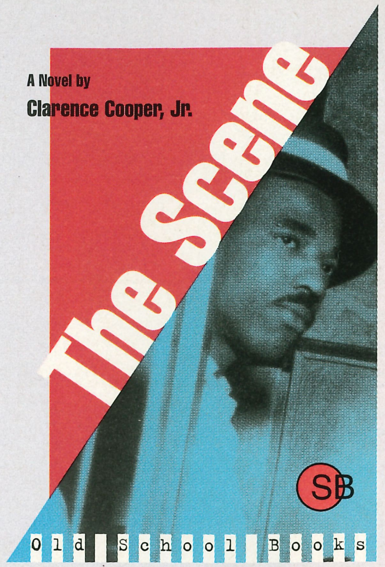

RE-BIRTH OF THE SLICK

If you can't get enough of Shaft, Foxy Brown (the original one) or Dolemite, then check **Old School Books'** (W.W. Norton & Company) new series of pulp fiction novels featuring the boldest African-American authors of our time. These new cultural artifacts are fast-paced and hard. They take the brutality and ruin of the urban Black landscape and transform them into art. Each character in the series is searching for "old school" wisdom and never loses sight of the racial, political and emotional context from which they came.

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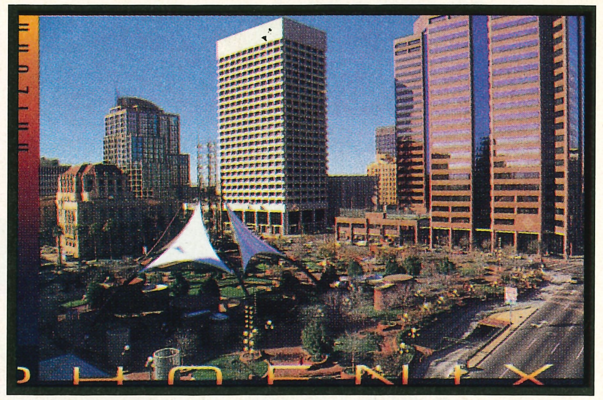
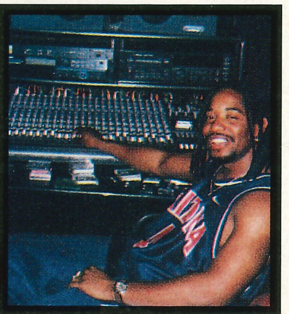


BY ALLEN S. GORDON "THA EBONY CAT"

The power hip-hop wields in unifying people of different cultures is mysterious to say the least. Traditional activities or institutions like team sports and schools temporarily transcend racial tension, but their bonding effects only last as long as each party participates in the event. For the most part, economics and education are what separate the haves from have-nots.

But hip-hop allows for total acceptance regardless of color, culture, level of education or economics, as long as there is a genuine love for some aspect of the culture—be it DJing, B-boying, MCing or music. It is this force that is sweeping through the mountainous landscape of Phoenix, where the city's African, Caucasian and Chicano youth now have a venue of mutual interest in which to explore each other's differences while having a good time.

In the midst of overcoming their differences, the youth still contend with Phoenix's older, anti-Martin Luther King holiday generation, who have yet to relinquish their firm grip on the city's communication outlets, concerts, clubs and law enforcement structure (read: cops). Radio (even college stations) in Phoenix is very anti-hip-hop. Turning the dial from station to station, your tuner will usually only pick up country, top 40, alternative, rock oldies and metal, leaving one to ponder the dryness of Phoenix's radio scene. Alex C. of **Power 92**, Phoenix's number one station, offers a different perspective. "I would have agreed with that at one time, but it's getting better. Things are becoming more open with hip-hop and that's a start. All we need is flavor and a chance for the scene to blow." He makes use of his airtime with the **Saturday Night Power Party** (8pm-2am). From 9pm to midnight, his competition is crosstown station **Magic 107** and DJ Roc's mix show.



NUTMEG (L) & VONTEL (R) ARE THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF TALENTED ACTS REPRESENTING THE SUN CITY

Television is just as standoffish. Hip-hop videos don't get much play mainly because local cable operators will not carry BET or the BOX. But there is strength in numbers, and the Chicano population are flexing their muscle. ***In The Mix*** (10-11pm, Sun & Tue.) is the most prominent local video show, hosted by Alex C. Also, seeing to the needs of their brethren, The Looters Clan (a southern California hip-hop group/organization) will soon have two hour-long video shows on the scene, ***Underground Flava*** and ***Cruisin' With La Raza***, a video talk show.

Though the youth meet resistance from the establishment, they can't shoulder the entire blame for the lack of a hip-hop club scene. A few shootings and deaths caused by the city's gang activity substantiated the closure of most night spots that attract a predominately Black or Chicano audience. The cops and community residents do what they can to deter potential club owners from showcasing rap, leaving hip-hop nights as experimental projects. Owners see how much money they can make and get out before any incidents of gang violence occur which would threaten to shut their business down.

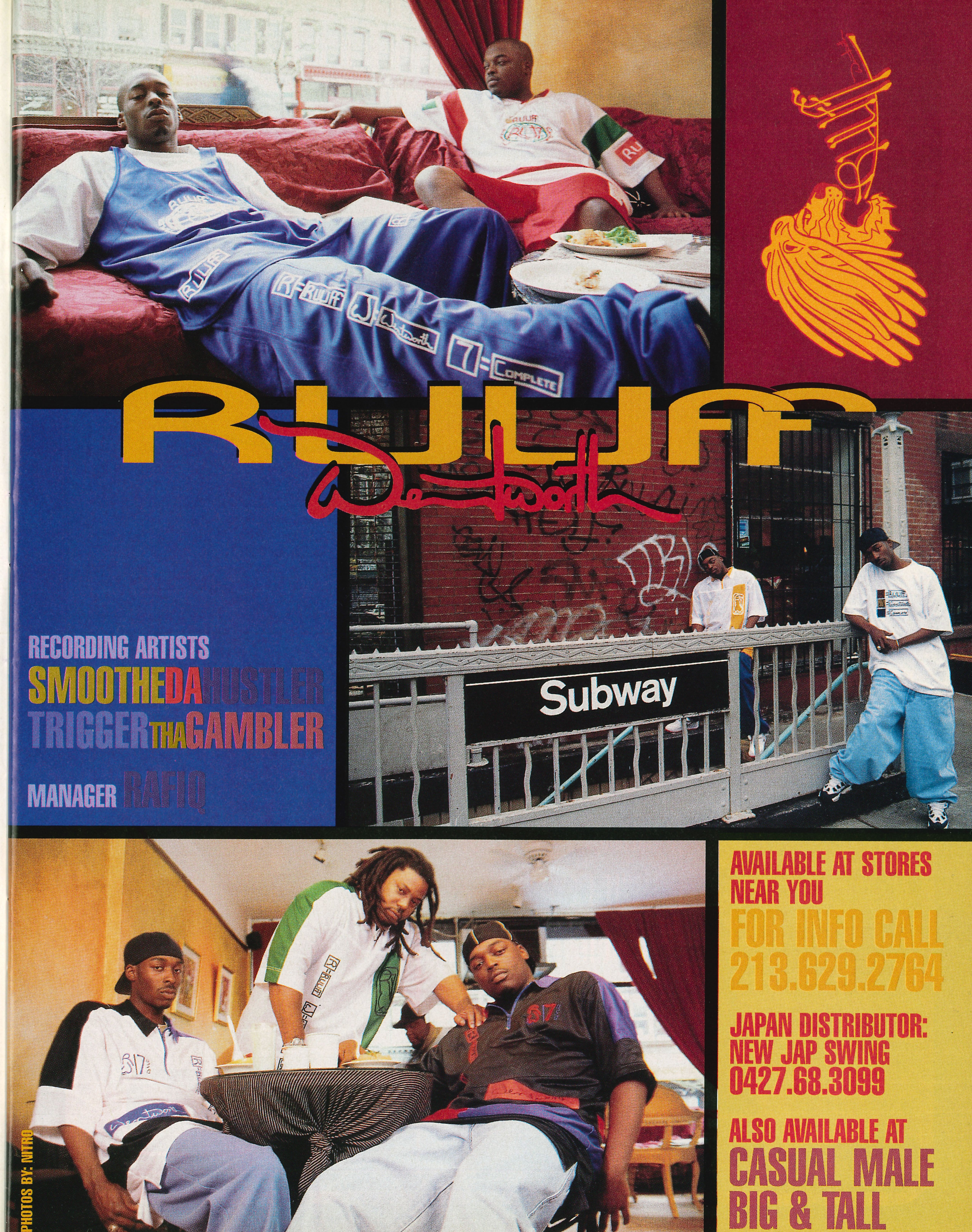
But, there is hope. **Club Anderson's** has been jumping every Thursday for several months without a glitch, and Phoenix Cardinal wide receiver Chuck Levy is setting up shop Mondays with two of the cities top DJs, Z-Trip and Fashen at **Club Tribeca**. While this handful of individuals makes whatever strides they can to break barriers established by old politics, others build personal foundations, hoping to blow up and finally put Phoenix on the map.

If **Adina Howard** laid claim to the land were she was raised, the Desert City might be a hotbed for some A&R scouts; but she didn't ,and record labels and rap tours continue to overlook Arizona when traveling from Texas to Cali. Determined to make some noise, several artists have taken it upon themselves to put out their own records. A large percentage of sales from gangsta rap albums come from Phoenix, leaving little curiosity as to the type of artists in the area, especially being four hours from Los Angeles. In spite of this, the truth of the matter is that Phoenix is pretty diverse musically and artistically. There are abstract groups, like B.O.P., Know Question and 22, who rhyme on almost any topic you can think of, as well as the strictly B-boy influenced DJ mix tapes of Z-Trip, Fade, Confusion and Fashen, and the techno/trip-hop/hip-hop tapes of DJ Al III.

The gangsta rap that originates from Phoenix tends to be less abrasive and a bit more cultured than the recent acts from their Pacific coast compadres. **Vontel** is on some next player shit with slammin' tracks that will hit stores this summer. The Weirdoz (unsigned) are a tight trio who may make everyone forget about the Dogg Pound. And Nutmeg, the area's lone female MC, is the first Phoenix rap act to go national with her album *Ghetto's Child*, featuring two songs with Arizona's newest resident, **Kool G. Rap**.

On the entrepreneurial side of the hip-hop scene, there has been significant progress. There is an underground magazine called **Super Events Ent.** (602-229-5144), two hip-hop clothing/DJ specialty shops—**The Arena** (602-263-0920) and **Swell & Mos Def Gear** (602-945-3898). Up and coming record labels include **Fo' Life Records**, **Heat City Records** and **Maryville Records**. When it comes to paint jobs and hittin' switches on your ride, **Modern Arte** (602-716-9161) has the solution.

Though the scene is picking up and coming together, the largest factors stifling culture growth appear to be internal. There's no sense of unity as far as getting everyone to pool their resources together; instead, each crew continues to struggle on its own. Attempts have been made to form an Arizona Hip-Hop Coalition, but its status and effectiveness remain in limbo. But with more individuals and crews becoming interested in representing Phoenix, they will eventually come to understand the age old adage, "united we stand, divided we fall." Ⓢ



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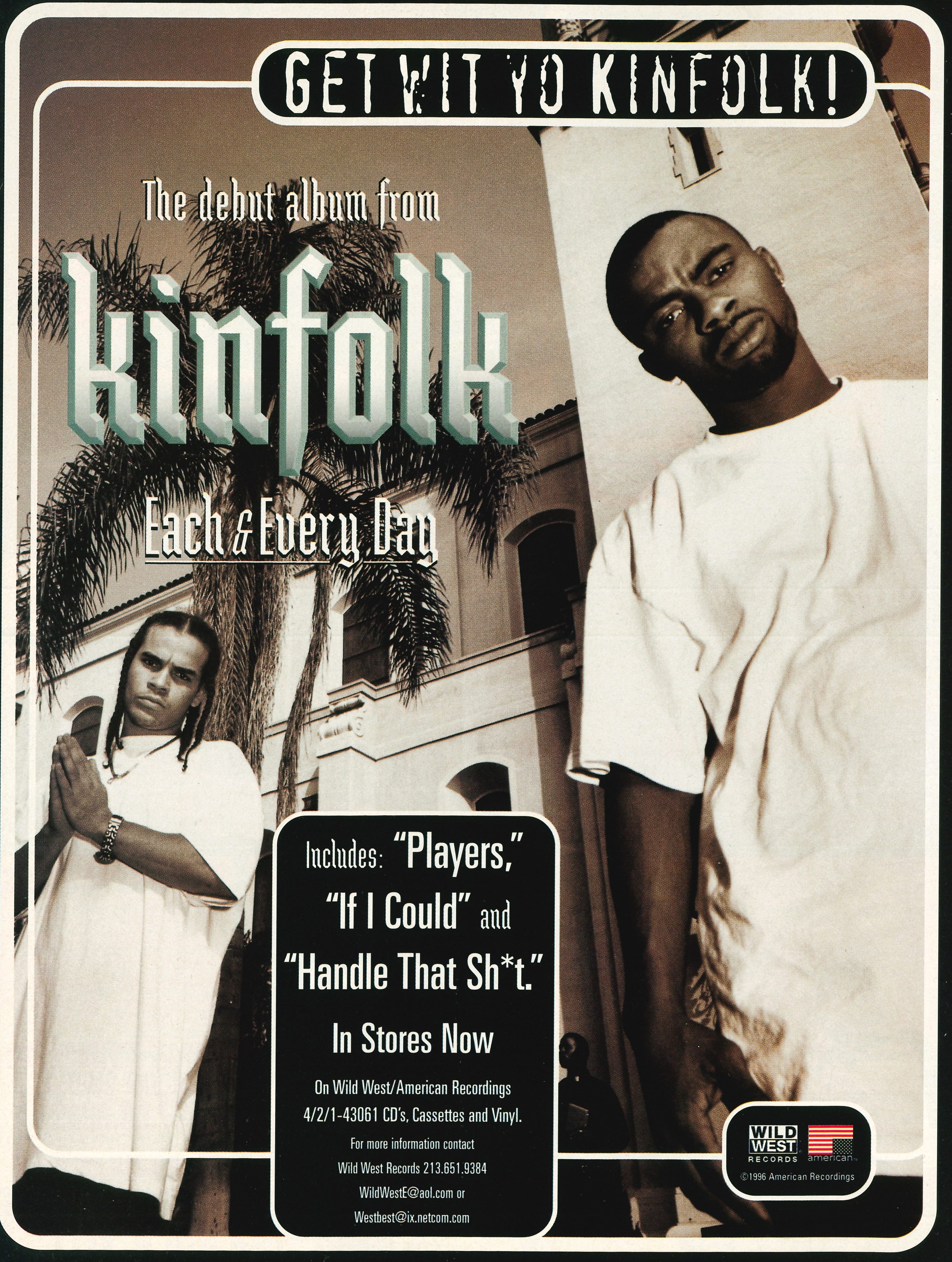
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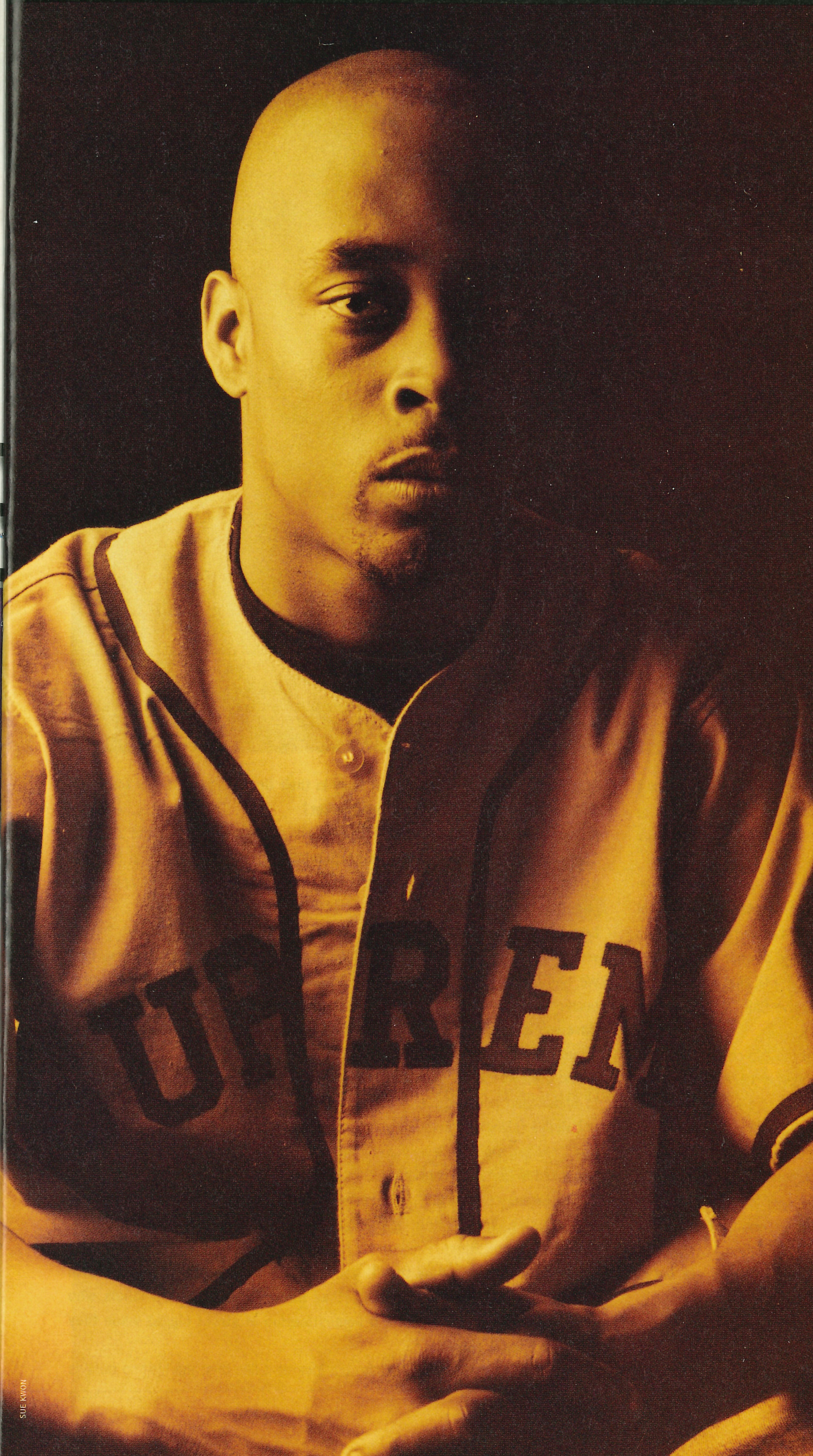

SUE KWON

BRONX RHYME SLINGER

SADAT X

Cast your mind back to late 1990 and you'll remember how four kids from New Rochelle, collectively known as Brand Nubian, dropped a fortified bomb on the Hip-Hop Nation with the release of their now classic album *One For All*. Grand Puba, Derek X, Lord Jamar and DJ Alamo represented many things as a group. During a time many consider to be the culmination of hip-hop's golden age, Brand Nubian combined the Afro-centric complexion of groups like X-Clan with five percent teachings exemplified in the songs of Public Enemy, Lakim Shabazz and Paris. But these cats were on some next shit. Their blend of street and mic savvy with knowledge of self illustrated that they also had the fly vocab to boot. Thus, *One For All* rocked heads from Now Rule to London well into the following summer and beyond, but scandalously never went gold.

Over five years have passed since then and the group (minus Puba since '92) is on a hiatus. Sadat ("Don't ever call me Derek 'cause it's not my righteous name") X is preparing to unleash his solo album, *Wild Cowboys*, on a Hip-Hop Nation quite different from the one that embraced Brand Nubian in 1990. With a new label behind him, a bangin' joint ("Loud Hangover") with Akinyele blowing up all over the place, and a new perspective on life, Sadat is ready to drop some lyrical jewels on a vastly expanded hip-hop audience raised on genocide and juice as opposed to mic creativity.

THE SOURCE: What's up with Brand Nubian right now?
SADAT: We're still together as a group. On my album you'll see I did a song with Grand Puba and right now we're waiting for Puba to get off Elektra because we really don't want to do it (a reunion album) on Elektra. I wasn't really satisfied with that label so hopefully he can get off soon. Me and Puba been working on a little independent project that we might just put out on the underground ourselves.

What were some of the problems you went through at your former label?
I think that the staff there wasn't really connected with the music. They didn't see the need for certain promotional tactics that are required when you're dealing with hip-hop. It just wasn't a good working relationship.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

DELPHINE FAWANDU

LEAVIN' EM FROZE

REAL LIVE

There are a whole bunch of crews, young and old, upset because they didn't get a shot to shine. As everyone should know, hip-hop is a tough market to break into, especially when record labels only mass produce clones of the latest hot artist as opposed to cultivating talent.

Many acts can be king of the hill on a local level, but that doesn't seem to mean anything anymore, at least in New York and LA. With all of the possible spoils that come with competing on a national level and potentially becoming a household name, the opportunity must be seized and taken advantage of when presented.

And for New Jersey's Real Live, featuring K-Def and Larry O, that moment was enjoyed to the fullest as their action theme track, "Real Live Shit," gained play on college and commercial stations throughout the country.

This moment has been a long time in the making for the two cousins, as both K-Def and Larry began honing their individual crafts seriously in 1978. No crew that has been around that long has shown up in the 1990's, 12 to 16 years later, still striving to improve their skills and come up with that one big hit.

It took the duo a four year split, as each pursued individual goals, before they would come back in 1994 under the tutelage of their experienced chief overseer, Marley Marl. Now they to head into '96 with a resume longer than any new group or artist today. As it was in the beginning, so shall it be in the end... a family affair.

The Source: You cats have been around since 1978, which is kinda dusty, but no way you were called Real Live in that era.

Larry: Naw [laughing]. At first we were called the Get Right Crew, and then K-Def and Larry O. Yo! We went through a couple of names.

Most hip-hip fans outside of New York never had the chance to see a Luv Bug Starski, Flash or DJ Hollywood get busy in their time, so how do you translate that passion for hip-hop into today's market?

K-Def: It's just a part of me and always will be. Honestly, after the Joy and Sugar Hill era I was open. I heard certain joints back in the day that had me saying I'm never leaving it. Larry's cousin was in Sugar Hill so his experience might be different.

Larry: My cousin was Wonder Mike. He and my brother had their crew, 'cause when Furious Five and New York had their thing going, Jersey had their crews too. We had crews like Phase Two, Vice Squad, Sound on Sound, The KA's, who became Sugar Hill Gang, so I got inspired like that.

Have you learned from any mistakes that Sugar Hill or other crews from the different eras made?

K-Def: Even with advice, you've got to have experience and go through it in order to understand not to do it. Because when you're young, someone with a little knowledge telling you something for your best interest—you really ain't tryin' to hear. You see the cars, jewels and females and get sidetracked from what you're supposed to be taking care of.

Larry: When we went solo, we learned a lot dealing with different people in the industry, so now that we've had those lessons from different eras, we're doing our thing.

When an artist says how they'll get violent with anybody who fucks with their gang, money, woman or rep, they never mention record labels who gank them for talent. Is there a domestication of street niggaz when they enter this legal game?

K-Def: That may be true in a sense, but look at it like this: the hip-hop thing is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

FACE LIFT

FACEMOB

New groups come a dime a dozen in the rap industry, but the Facemob, which is comprised of five MCs from five different states, is injecting a soulful urgency and sincerity into the mix that has been all-but-ignored by recent debut offerings. While DMG, 350, Devin, Smit-D and Chi-ray hail from Minnesota, Cleveland, Florida, Houston and Chicago, respectively, their diverse styles mix and match like any classic New York or Los Angeles quintet on their debut, *The Other Side of The Law.*

The brainchild of Geto Boys member Scarface, Facemob continues the strong tradition of Rap-A-Lot's gumbo funk-rooted, insightful music as evidenced by their performance on the *Tales from the Hood* soundtrack and the Geto Boys' *The Resurrection.* Blunts and hard times are cool, but the Mob gets deeper.

The Source: DMG, you had a solo album, *Rigormortiz.* How did that lay the foundation for you?

DMG: It was cool. It helped me coming into this project as already having a little background and knowing what was happening half way going on. But it is better for me, I think, being with my group because it takes the pressure up off of me. Plus it's less writing, but then it's more fun.

On "In The Flesh" you all say, "sometimes I can't bring myself to trust my kin." What do you think has led to that?

It's a lot of pressure, man. Everybody's trying to make moves and everybody's trying to cross motherfuckers out in the process of making their moves that there's really nobody that you can trust but yourself or your partner, and your partner's a chosen few.

Why do you think today's youth feel so helpless?

Niggas feel this way because there's a crisis going on, man. Everybody's playing everybody to take all type of game. It's either you're going to win or lose in this game and everybody wants to win. So everybody wants to be on the winning team or the winning side even if it means crossing another motherfucker out.

What role does Scarface play in your group?

He's like the pioneer for this group. He's like what everybody feeds on. He's like the living example in the group. If we stay dedicated to doing this shit or if we work hard enough for this shit, this is what can happen from hard work.

On "Coldest" and "Rival Turf," you incorporated lyrics from Doug E. Fresh, Brand Nubian and Eric B. and Rakim. How do you compare the stuff from back then to today's music?

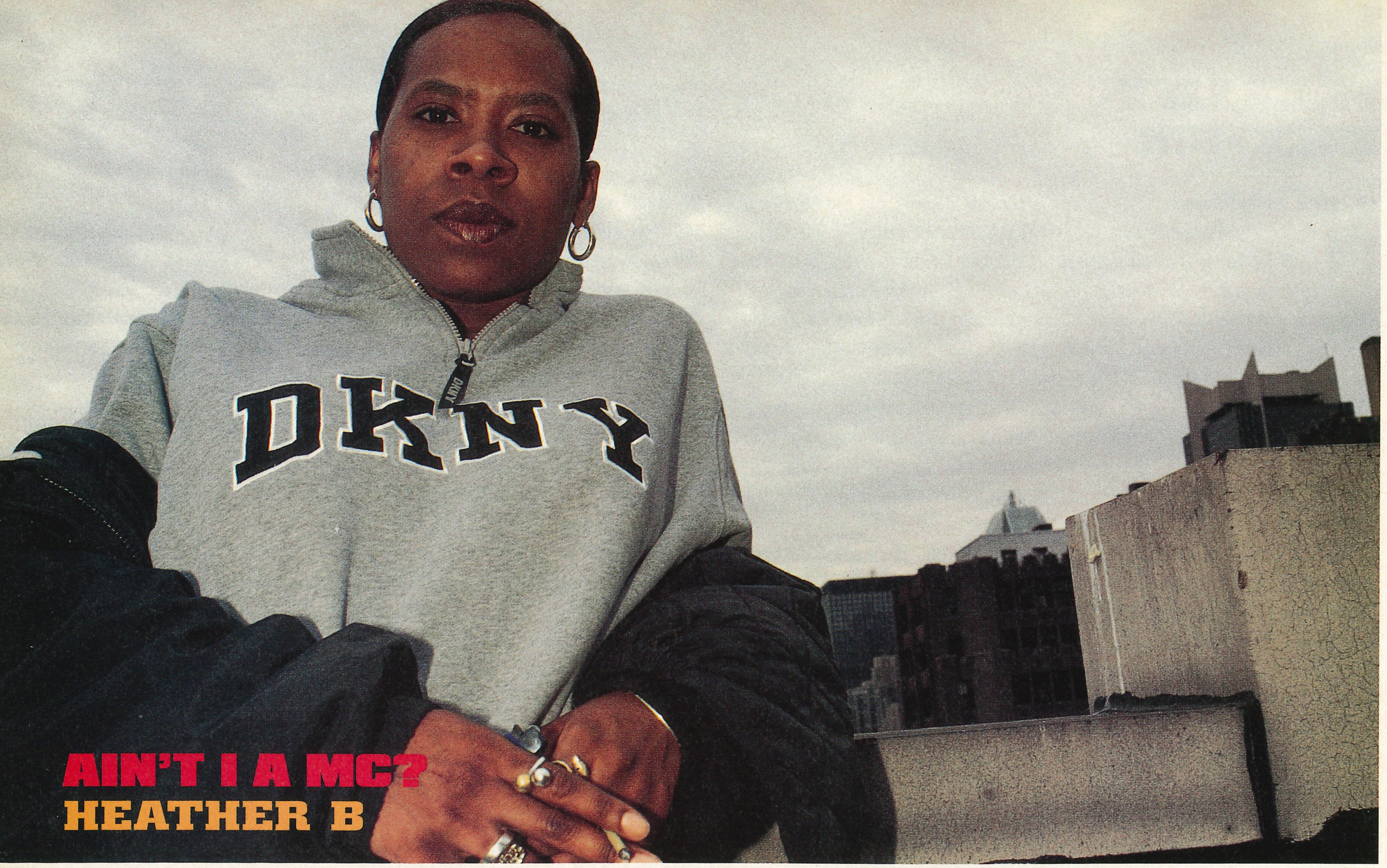
I think the music nowadays is more advanced, but I think it was more original back then in those days. I think it's better to some extent, but back then it was more original. You can just think back, "Yeah, niggas used to rock like this, niggas used to rock like that." But back then, them niggas they wasn't using no excerpts or nothing. They would just sit down and actually think of that shit. Just writing.

How do you think Rap-A-Lot is perceived within the rap community and by society in general?

To the ghetto motherfuckers, Rap-A-Lot is like another motherfucking Def Jam because it has helped so many people out in the ghetto. But certain people that I talk to, when we get on the subject of Rap-A-Lot, they tell me, they try to feed me with negative shit about Rap-A-Lot. It's been around for 10 years and that speaks for itself. There are gold records coming off this label. So I hope people pick that up and use that as a good vibe instead of using it as a negative vibe. Rap-A-Lot is really a blessing to some young people like me because earlier in life I didn't know where I would be five or ten years from then. It helped me and made it so I was able to help my family.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

JIM BINDER



CHRIS JENSON

AIN'T I A MC?

HEATHER B

Life for the female MC has never been easy. Sales figures have always averaged lower than the brothers; the only women in rap to ever sell gold or beyond are Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah and Da Brat (plus J.J. Fad, if you're really digging). And respect due for skills has likewise been a stumbling block for rappers with more estrogen than testosterone—until the recent likes of Lauryn Hill, Foxxy Brown, Bahamadia, Little Kim. . . and Heather B.

Getting her start in the cipher of the old Boogie Down Productions crew, Heather Gardner came up on *Edutainment's* "7 Dee Jays" back in '90, representing alongside Blastmaster KRS-One. After several stale record industry deals, the suburbanite exposure of MTV's "The Real World" and last summer's hot "All Glocks Down," Heather B goes for dolo with her debut set, *Takin' Mine*. Kenny Parker lays the beats down, but as any exposure to Heather B will tell you, this sister is doing it for herself.

The Source: Russell Simmons once advised Run-DMC against doing that commercial with Max Headroom and "Beats to the Rhyme," because it might ruin their street credibility. Along those lines, do you at all regret doing the Real World for MTV? Do you think you might encounter a problem being taken seriously?

Heather B: Nah. I don't regret doing the show at all. First of all, 'cause all you had to do was go there and be yourself. And they gon' pay you to go and be yourself? They gon' pay me to come live in this crib for $4400 a month? I ain't mad at you. I ain't have to go nowhere with my ass out; I ain't have to go nowhere and play myself, so it was cool. Hopefully heads'll just get with me on the music tip and just look at the show as, oh, that was something she did; like a "by the way...," or "oh, yeah..." I encourage people to go do it, but make sure you have your shit together before you even go do that show, 'cause MTV ain't hooking you up at all. MTV ain't really a outlet for hip-hop anyway.

The top-selling female MCs are Salt-N-Pepa, Da Brat and Queen Latifah. What do you think it is about them that got them over?

Promotion. Every time you go into the record store, they shit is *there.* It ain't in the back, it's like, boom, Salt-N-Pepa! New album out! Flippin' through The Box, commercial on—Da Brat! BET, it's promotion. You know it's there. Record companies, on the low, they got a lot of weight, man. When they decide to throw they weight on you, you could go!

Do you feel females are into hip-hop as much? There's a conception that a sister is spending cream on D'Angelo before the GZA.

I think females are into hip-hop. Females buy records! They into hip-hop. But if you go do a jam, like you in a club, sometimes you might be rocking 300 niggas and there might be 20 girls in the party. It don't mean the females ain't feeling hip-hop, but it's like them trooping females that be out 2 in the morning with baseball caps on, like, rocking. On the real, the ones I run into like that, they either just love hip-hop that much, or they aspiring artists themselves. They just out here paying they dues. They out here doing they shit and being a part of history.

Who would win in a battle for lyrical supremacy, Miss Melodie and D-Nice of the old BDP, or Channel Live and Mad Lion of the new?

[Extreme laughter] Oh my God. I ain't hear Miss Melodie or D-Nice rhyme in a long time. Channel Live I think is dope, I like Channel Live. And I like Mad Lion, he killing that hip-hop/reggae shit. The shit that he came with, he *came.* That's a good battle, maybe Pay Per View; you should try to hook that up.

Maybe for a Sprite commercial. What's your relationship with KRS-One now?

I got respect for him. I came up through that camp, so I gotta always respect the foundation and give my props where props is due. But as far as Heather B is concerned, man I'm over *here.* I'm doing my shit. I've always been the type of person where yo, if I fuck up, it's gonna be my fault. It ain't gonna be nobody else's fault. I wanted to do things my way, not to say his way was wrong; we ain't even come to that. It was just like, I wanted to do some ol' next shit for real. I just went out and branched out on my own. If I see him, it's like "what's up," and if not, fuck it. Me and Kenny more or less work closer together.

You own a spot out in Jersey, Nubian Hair and Nails. Do you recognize the importance of Black business,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

BRONX RHYME SLINGER

SADAT X

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

What's different about your new situation?

Loud is a young staff, the office is always open and you can always come through. Those people at Loud are all around the same age and they're fans of yours, so they're working that much more to make sure your product does good.

How did you hook up with Akinyele?

I've known Ak for a while 'cause I remember seeing videos that he had done and seeing him in the past at different places. We hooked up because we both signed to Loud at around about the same time. His manager, Jessica (Rosenblum), was also managing Funkmaster Flex and she saw that I was gonna come out soon, so she hooked up me and Akinyele with Flex 'cause we'd all gain a little something from it.

So the beef between the BX and QB is truly squashed?

Generally, New York has been on a peaceful vibe because they feel that the West Coast has been steppin' on them. Right now I would say New York is the most unified it's been in a while.

How far back do your Bronx connections go?

Well, originally I'm from the Bronx. My parents are from New Rochelle, so we moved to New Rochelle, but the rest of my family stayed in the Bronx. I was always going back and forth. Everybody lived in the same area—Fat Joe, Diamond D, Showbiz and A.G. Everybody lived on the same stretch on the South Bronx.

How do you currently see the state of hip-hop?

I've seen in the last year, in New York at least, it's back to the craft. The actual lyrics and the whole feeling of hip-hop. I feel that when I listen to the Raekwon album, the Genius album, Large Professor. I've heard some of his stuff that's coming out on Geffen. Also with myself coming out I think you'll see a trend back towards the actual lyrics of it, because for a minute it was getting away from that. I definitely like to be creative.

How have you evolved lyrically over the years to where you're at now?

When we first came out it was during a hard righteousness era and with the righteousness there was the Five Percent Nation that supposedly didn't like white people or whatever. But I think as I've gone and traveled all over the world and I've been to different places, I've seen that you have to take people as people. You got bad Black people, you got bad white people, you got bad people, know what I'm sayin'? Now I deal with everyone one to one. I think everybody sees that after a while because back then (1990) we was much younger and hadn't really seen much of the world or been anywhere. As you travel and meet people you learn and see things a little differently.

Tell me about your "wild cowboy style."

My peoples always used to call themselves cowboys so we just incorporated the wild cowboys with that. That's my group under me and they're also featured on my album. It's kinda bugged out. Money Boss Players is my people too. They're on the underground scene in the Bronx and are led by Minnesota, who also does producing. We got something called The Firm that's coming out. That's a compilation thing with Nas, Lord Tariq, Large Professor, myself, a whole bunch of people.

What's your take on the East coast/West coast rift?

It's crazy. It's been going back and forth and I hate to say it, but man I think somebody might get really hurt this year behind some bullshit, you know what I'm sayin'? If you kill somebody you going to jail, and then what? I think it's bullshit. When Tupac came to New York we had nothing but love for him.

Everyone's in the same hustle, it doesn't make sense. . .

It's strange because we shot part of our video ("Hold On") in L.A. and we had props from them. Now I'm hearing recently there was a show out there with Keith Murray, Onyx, Redman and Erick Sermon and they got into a little hassle with Death Row and Tupac. I don't know no more, you know? I don't want to go out there no more if it's gonna be against safety reasons. I'm just going out there to do music, I'm not interested in all that other bullshit.

RICK THORNE

LEAVIN' EM FROZE

REAL LIVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

"legal," but everything going on in it is illegal. And they (companies) use the music and entertainment as a front, but it's the same game as the drug game, on a bigger level. And because there's paperwork and it's an institution, it's legal... if that's what you want to call it.

Larry: You still might have to take those procedures to get your point across or go the extra mile for someone to hear you out. It might not be the right "business" move, but when you playing with someone's money and livelihood who has kids and a family. . . you don't play with grown folks.

K-Def: We talk about that on the album. We don't get down like that, but don't play us for no suckers and think that it can't happen to you (record label).

What level are you trying to take your music to at this point? What do you want to accomplish?

K-Def: Basically, this is a collaboration of something to bring the feeling like when hip-hop music was hot. And the point or peak was in Marley's days with "Eric B For President," "Raw" and all that, joints that weren't the clearest, but it was the roughness of the sound and the essence. After that everybody wanted to dress their music up with a bunch of this and that. So I'm taking that style of music from then and using the modern technology to make raw sounds and bring it back.

Larry: Lyrically, I'm doing the same thing I was in 1984. A lot of these jokers started doing this overnight, popping Cristal and all that. I got tapes from 1985 and '86 talking about Cristal and the Rucker league games, doing all that, but we were overlooked for years. But no more.

ALLEN S. GORDON "THA EBONY CAT"

FACE LIFT

FACE MOB

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

How did you go about bringing so much passion to your music?

350: Whatever somebody brings to this rap game, that's their thing. But to me, it's been a drought. So for us, to me, it's like we're the water coming to save the drought. They had their last little drop of water and the world is just thirsty for this shit and we're the juice. We're that, the liquid form of it.

How do you think rap is doing right now?

From a scale of one to ten, it is about a four. It has dropped in a major way and we're about to pick up the other six that's missing. It's our time to come. It's just unexplainable, dog. It's just our time to come.

SOREN BAKER

AIN'T I A MC?

HEATHER B

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 44

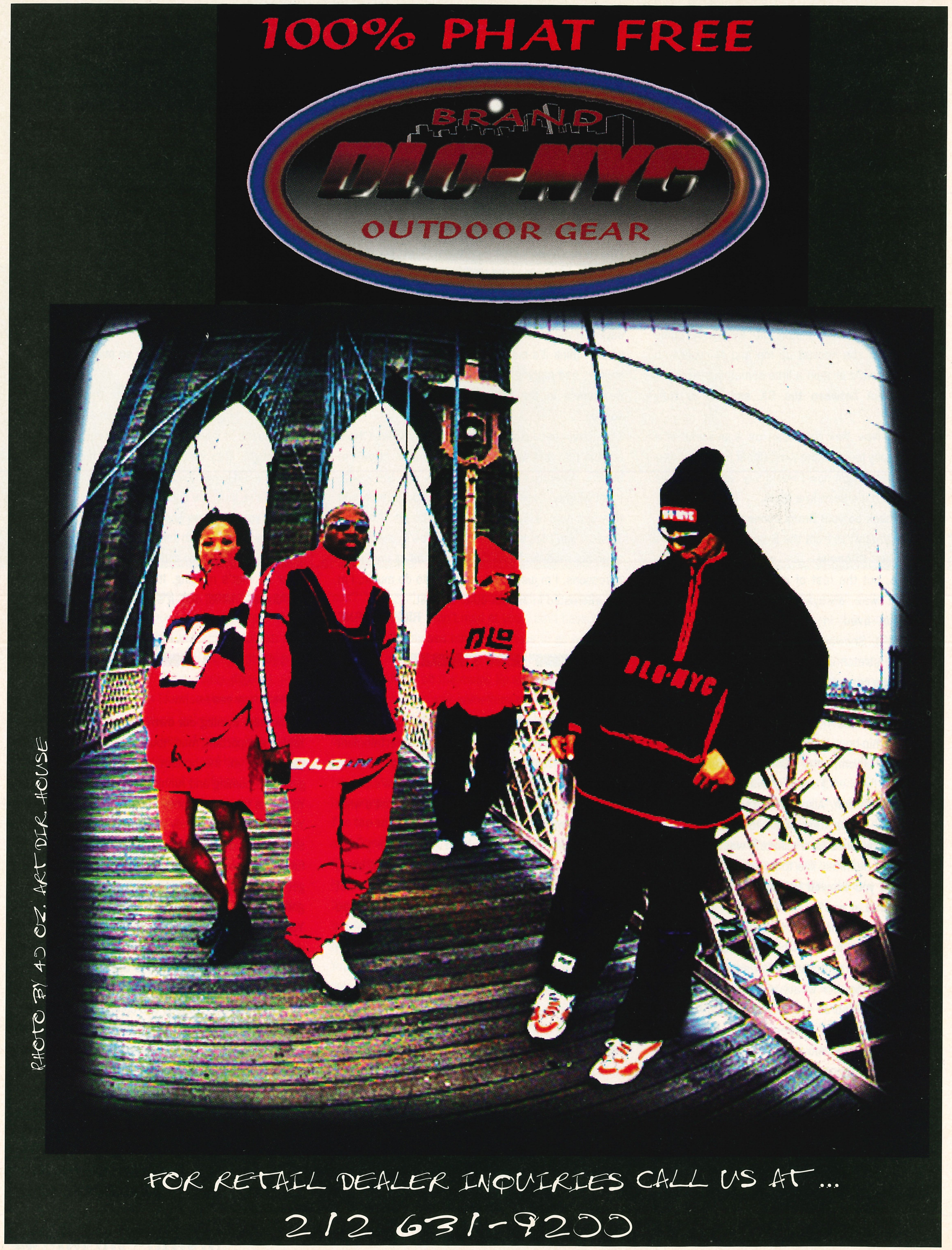
Black folks owning our own?

Yeah it's important, man. You gotta do something with your cash, yo, the bottom line. 'Cause shows ain't gonna be coming and running like you think they are. You gotta take your money and put it into something. You gotta put your money into something that you can show your kids later on. You can't show your kids a fuckin' old ass concert stage or something. Fat Joe got some shit, Naughty [By Nature], Wu-Tang... you gotta do that. Pepa, she got some shit in Atlanta.

You've been through more than one sour record deal, and *Takin' Mine* is your first album to get released. Exactly how shady is the record industry?

That's what I mean, how important it was to me to go through the whole process and come up through BDP. It just opened my eyes to so much shit. You sit back and be like, recoupable? You gotta be up on your publishing and all that other shit. If not, you finished. The business is shady, but you gotta be up on it. Ask questions, fuck that. Lawyers and managers, they work for *you.* The record label. Don't you be sitting around waiting for a fat-ass check and it ain't coming. Anything with my name on it, I'm involved in it.

MILES MARSHALL LEWIS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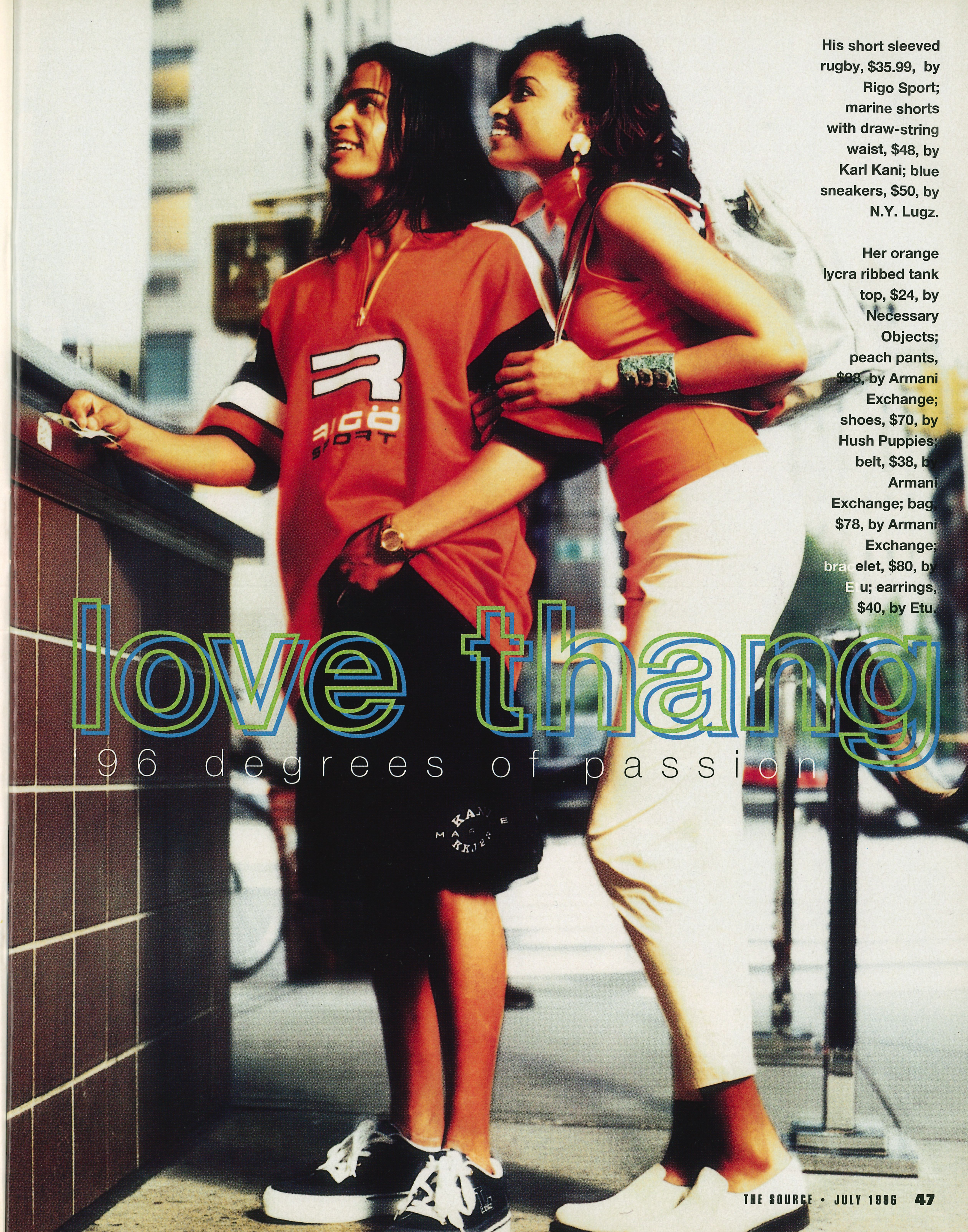
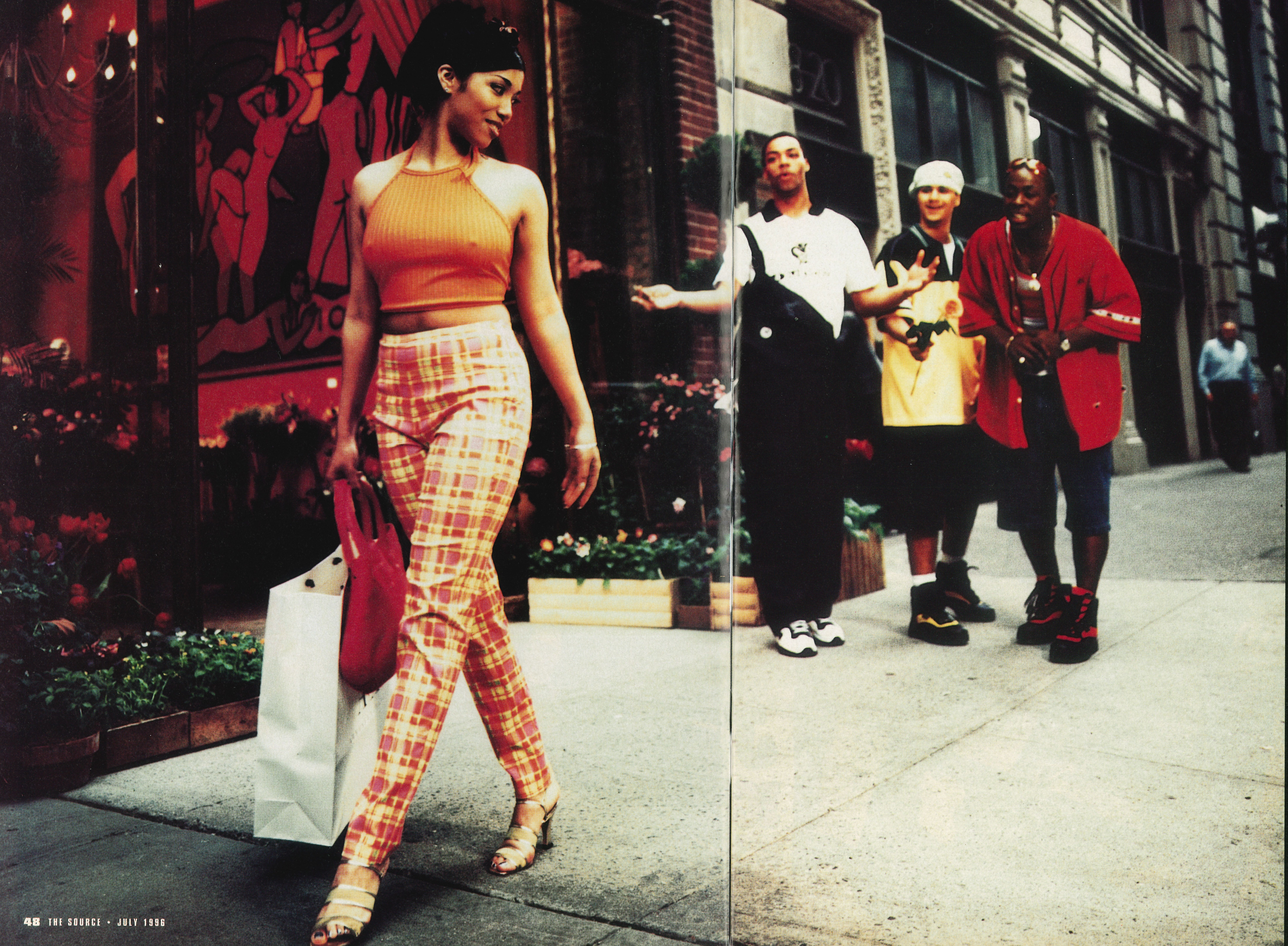


love thang

96 degrees of passion

His short sleeved rugby, $35.99, by Rigo Sport; marine shorts with draw-string waist, $48, by Karl Kani; blue sneakers, $50, by N.Y. Lugz.

Her orange lycra ribbed tank top, $24, by Necessary Objects; peach pants, $88, by Armani Exchange; shoes, $70, by Hush Puppies; belt, $38, by Armani Exchange; bag, $78, by Armani Exchange; bracelet, $80, by Etu; earrings, $40, by Etu.



L to R:
Orange halter top, $24, by Necessary Objects; plaid pants, $44, by Necessary Objects; shoes, $125, by Kenneth Cole; pink bag, $88, by Armani Exchange.

Black nylon jump suit, $90, by Maurice Malone; white t-shirt with collar, $20, by 9-Myles; sneakers, $69.99, by Vuarnet.

Black and yellow zipped front shirt, $64, by Verso; black denim shorts, $50, by Sir Benni Miles; boots, $210, by Trezeta; hat, $25, by 2B!

Red and white tank top, $25, by 2B!; red baseball shirt, $60, by FUBU; denim shorts, $35.99, by Rigo Sport; boots, $210, by Trezeta.

Photographer:
WILLIAM RICHARDS
Stylist:
CLYTO ROSE
Make up artist:
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Hair stylist:
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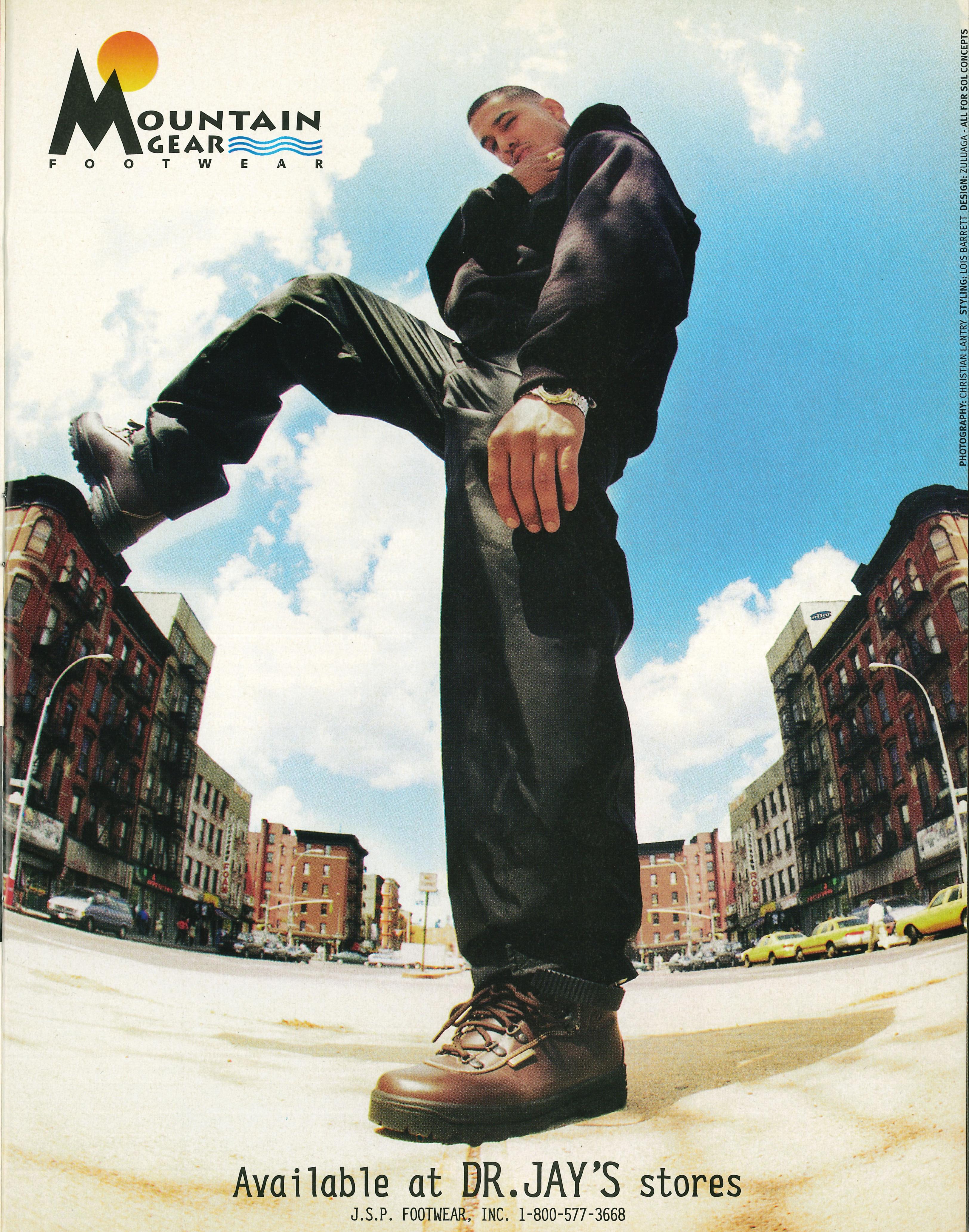
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PREVIOUS PAGE, L TO R:
White button front polo shirt, $64, by Karl Kani; blue nylon pants with reflective strip, $75, by Verso; sneakers, $50, by N.Y. Lugz; hat, $25, by 2B!

Blue ribbed sweater vest, $68, by Armani Exchange; purple scarf, $38, by Armani Exchange; green linen shorts, $58, by Armani Exchange.

White linen shirt, $58, by Armani Exchange; green pants, $42, by Necessary Objects; white sandals, $22.98, by Studio Roma; earrings, $40, by Etu.

White sport jacket, $195, by Armani Exchange; orange plaid shirt, $78, by Armani Exchange; brown linen pants, $88, by Armani Exchange; shoes, $70, by Hush Puppies.

THIS PAGE:
His jacket, $195, by Armani Exchange; matching pants, $68, by Armani Exchange; orange shirt, $78, by Armani Exchange; shoes, $70, by Hush Puppies.

Her white linen jacket, $145, by Armani Exchange; white linen skirt, $58, by Armani Exchange; necklace, $45, by Etu; earrings, $40, by Etu; shoes, $60, by Steve Madden.

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THE SOURCE
THE MAGAZINE OF HIP-HOP MUSIC, CULTURE & POLITICS

CYBER–NEGROIDIAL RHAPSODY

THE BAY AREA STEPCHILDREN OF THE FUNK CREATE A NEW CHAPTER IN THE NEXT SCHOOL OF HIP-HOP

BY JAMES SHARPER

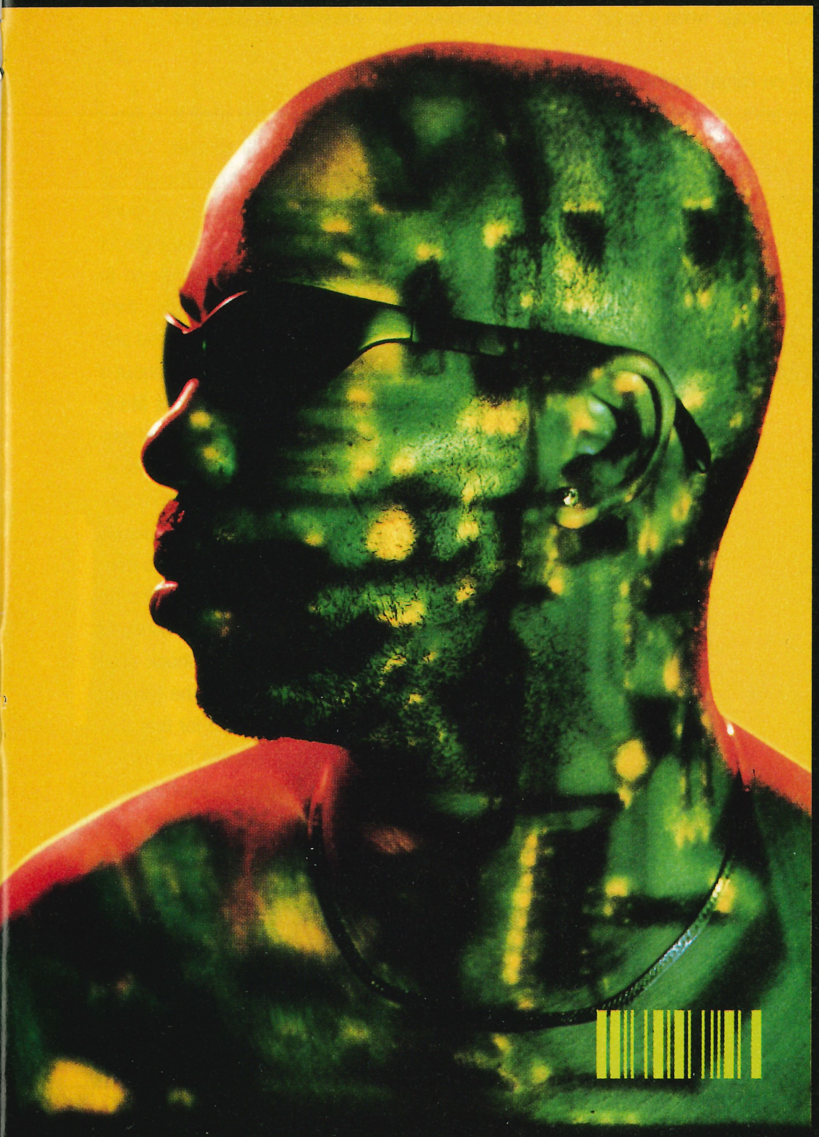
"You got hunger, homelessness... you got niggas on drugs and you gonna tell me the worst thing you can find to step-up on is some niggas rappin'? That's a muthufuckin' gimmick," says Digital Underground vocalist Clee.

The recent rantings of pop culture demagogues, irate jazz musicians and old school activists fiending for a picket sign fix would give a person the impression that there was a time when Black music was the aural equivalent of unsweetened cream of wheat. The truth, of course, is quite different. A case could be made that a defining characteristic of Black music is its three-dimensionality regarding human experience. Sure, Marvin did "What's Goin' On," but he also did "You Sure Love To Ball." Aretha Franklin came to fame as a gospel singer who could make Satan himself speak in tongues. But, there is also the Aretha who is known for such loin-tingling ballads as "Dr. Feelgood." And, of course there's the irrepressible George Clinton—often imitated but seldom matched in wit or insight.

Clinton, as the most "high" Wizard of Groove, Dr. Funkenstein, tapped this planet's collective jaw with his brand of funk. He soaked up the sonic world around him, drawing influences from the guitar driven psychedelic music of the '60s and '70s, adding this to the thick-gravy funk he picked up from the Godfather, James Brown. But, Clinton's funk stank differently due largely (though not exclusively) to his awareness of the possibilities of electronic music and his pulpit-players' verbal agility. He wrapped astute cultural, political and social insight in dance beat metaphor, and boudoir innuendo.

Like all great musicians, Clinton defies temporal designation—his music is no less relevant now than it was twenty years ago. But, there exists in every generation a desire for a representative to take up the struggle using the language and techniques developed through that generation's joys and sorrows.T'ain't easy. It requires creativity and bravery—you can't allow yourself to be punked by public opinion or pimped by market forces.

Enter the Digital Underground, this generation's elaboration on the funk thesis. Comparisons have been made between this group of musicians (and, make no mistake, they are musicians) and Parliament/Funkedelic since the release of "doowutchyalike" back in '89. Usually focusing on DJ Fuze's adept use of samples from the expansive P-Funk library or alternately on Humpty's Sir Nosian rubber shnoz, these comparisons generally sidestepped the deeper relationship of this group to P-Funk and, more importantly to the mysterious ways of his majesty Dr. Funkenstien. Shock G, who with Money B and DJ Fuze make up the core of the group, says of Clinton, "He's my father—my illegitimate father by a different mother... I was really raised by the brother and a lot of the musicians in his crew." (He's quick to add that Humpty, also known as Smooth Eddie Humphrie, is Bootsy's son.)



Like the many-limbed monster Parliament (which morphed smoothly into Bootsy's Rubber Band, The Brides of Funkenstien, Parlet, Funkedelic and other shapes), the Digital Underground is more than a rap group, it's an aggregate; a futuristic guerrilla army which reconfigures itself to suit its needs. "You'll never see all of us in one place at one time," Money B says calmly, sounding more like the leader of a spy network than a multi-talented MC, producer and manager.

New members of the Underground army include guitarist Eric Baker, vocalist Erika Sulpacio, and MC Tyranny. The new album features Digital Underground old heads and homies like DJ Fuze, Clee, Saafir, Del The Funkee Homosapien, The Luniz and many others, but there's one notable exception—Digital Undrground's MC emeritus, Tupac Shakur. Shock says of his friend and bandmate, "If as much negativity as was said about him was true, then he couldn't be free right now... The real fools know what's goin' on. He's being used by the better forces to get messages across... all the drama is just to keep him in people's face 'cause if you too clean cut and too quiet, America don't wanna have nothin' to do with you."

"Tupac is my dog, always gone be," Money B adds. "He's not on this new album and that's just because of his situation and everything that was goin' on around him at the time we were recording. At the time he was booked doing his thing and we were doing our thing—there wasn't no love ever lost. Once you get in Digital Underground, you in Digital Underground—it's like a gang, you always family." Nuff said.

Besides altering their composition for this outing, the band also left Tommy Boy Records, their label for seven years, and moved to Massachusetts-based Critique Records. "It was a mutual thing," Shock says of the decision to leave Tommy Boy. "We felt like we still had something to say, and they kinda felt that they'd milked all of the pop singles out of us." He describes the parting as amicable, saying, "It's all love," and that he will still work with the label in some capacity.

Carl Strube, CEO of Critique Records, loves what Digital Underground has to say. "They have a uniqueness to them that is not like a lot of other acts that come and go," Strube explains. He feels this gives the group a strong fan base. "What makes

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM RICHARDS

them unique," he goes on to say, "is that they don't write verse, chorus, verse, chorus, hook—their stuff has a lot of depth to it. They talk about love, they talk about a lot of different things."

This depth is evident in Digital Underground's musicality, which recalls the early days of hip-hop before the sampler became the instrument of choice. They also use the subtle, humorous methodology employed by Clinton as a means of hipping people to shackles on their minds and asses. Many other bands, such as the Red Hot Chili Peppers, have tried to imitate the music, but when it came to the message, they came up shawt, sounding more like bad comics than funk musicians.

Digital Underground never misses a beat. And though Clinton's music is their primary inspiration, they pick-up musical and philosophical influences wherever they find them and add these flavors to the P-Funk stew. "We not only pullin' game from Biz Markie, De La or whoever else is using laughs; we pullin' game from Richard Pryor, Eddie Griffin, television shows, anything," Shock says. "Another place we get a lot of game from is 'cause we got a lot of traditional musician homies who's always givin' us a little guidance here and there. Me and Eric Baker [guitarist and new Digital Underground member] go down to the Fifth Amendment [a Bay area club] and sit in and play blues."

Versatility such as this allows Digital Underground to bypass the one-dimensionality which seems to be doing a vampiric Lestat to hip-hop's jugular. You will not find them plugging clothing, expensive liquor or weaponry. Not that they may have a problem with that kind of rap; they're just on some different shit—they open eyes as well as thighs.

And not that there's any Arrested Development-style pontificating. Like 21-year-old Digital Underground vet Clee says, "Don't nobody likes a nigga tellin' 'em what to do." They camouflage commentary in thick layers of pungent funk, drums as tight and sparse as a hoochie's pajamas, and humor, which at times falls just short of outright dementia. And, just when you think you peeped their program, they rip through the dense mist of their unfiltered keyboards; coming southpaw with straight-up booty talk or perhaps a love song. They're not afraid to piss anyone off and they don't care to conform to anybody's idea of what a rap group should talk about. It just doesn't matter to Digital Underground—if they want to do something, they do it. "You got a lot of political leaders," Clee says, "who tell you this and tell you that, but got twelve women at the house. We let niggas know there's something you need to check in for but we ain't gonna tell you to do anything we wouldn't do." "Digital don't front on shit," says Tyranny, a new member of the group who hails from New York City. "It ain't one thing right here, then change when you get there—it's straight through."

"I Want It All," the last song on *Future Rhythm,* is a virtual ballad to dichotomy. The lyrics, soaked in a mellow groove, juxtapose the need to be sober against the desire to be high; the love of life with the curiosity about the mysteries of death. Humpty explains it best at the end of his last verse: "I wanna be a real humanitarian/ Eat fish and become a vegetarian/ But after the party's over at two am, then I wanna get a Fatburger!"

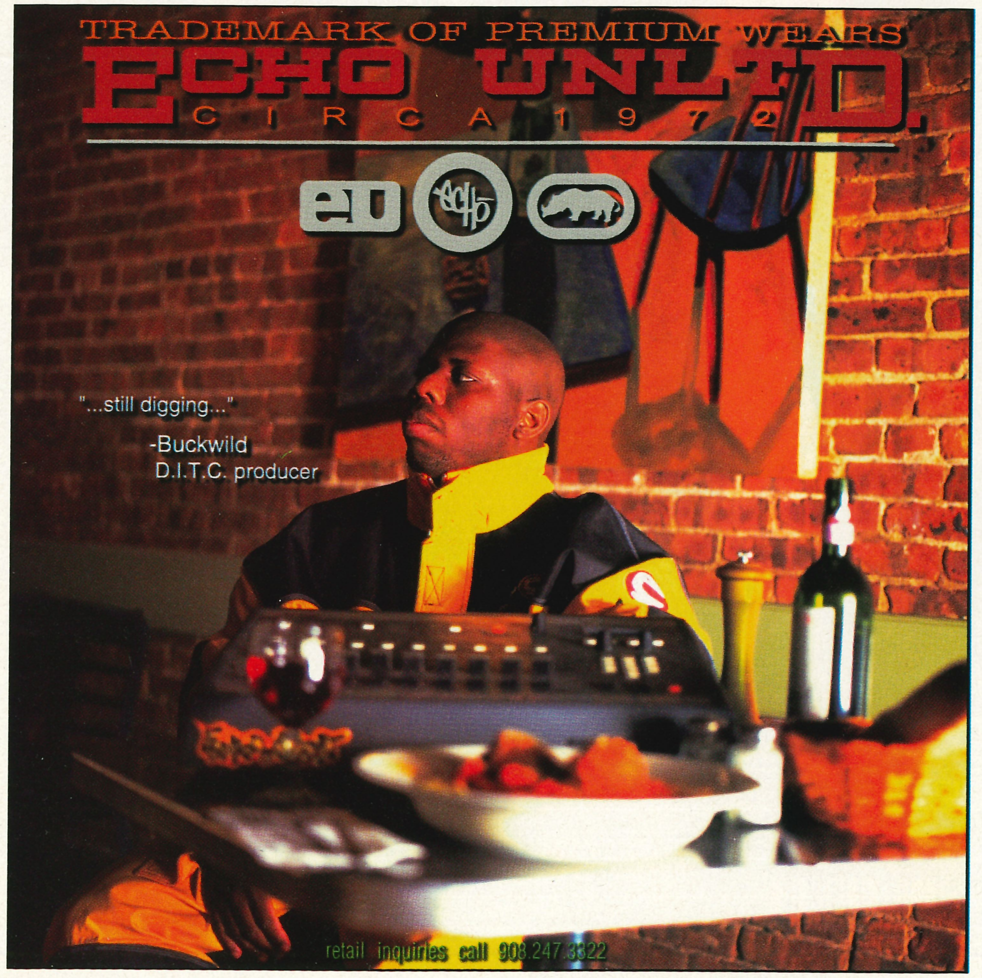
Shock philosophizes on the theme: "First of all, in the entire spectrum of time—you talkin' 'bout infinity and how long the universe has been here and how long it's gone be [here] after we're extinct—your little fifty to a hundred year life represents a little speck. You here and you outta here... All of that nudity in the videos sometimes, that's realism. You know what's unreal?" Shock asks rhetorically. "A whole world where all you know is straight up positivity or where all you know is straight up negativity. We not tryin' to be Luke widdit, but we not tryin' to be X Clan widdit either."

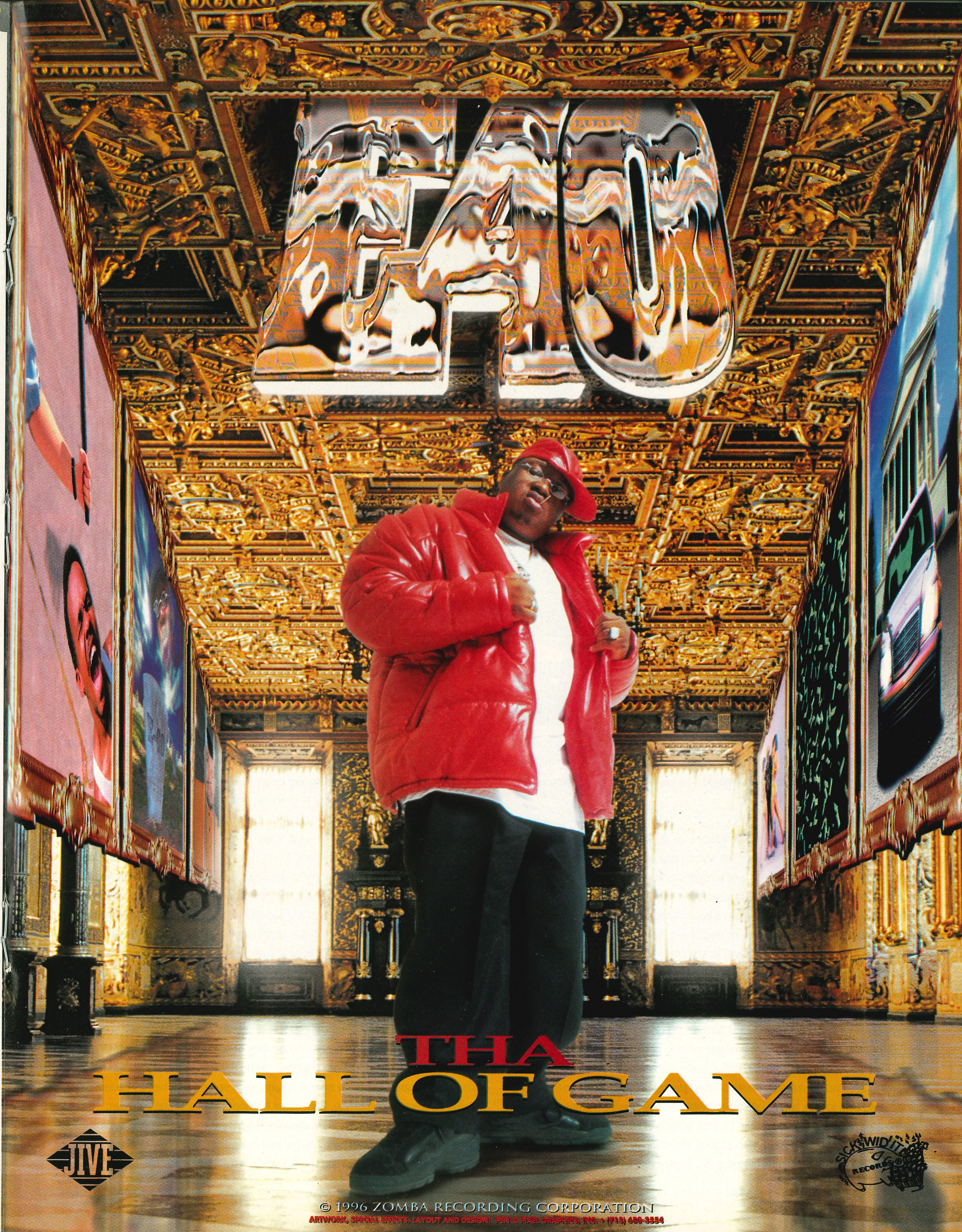
Money B, who will release a compilation, *Money B Presents... Folk Music (Music By My Folks Fo' My Folks),* on his own label, Bobby Beat Records, makes it plain. "I might wake-up one mornin' and be hard as fuck—I wanna fuck, but then at times, I'm tryin' to get a job and niggas is dissin' me and I'm like, 'Damn, shit is fucked-up for a nigga,' ya feel me... Ain't no such thing as good and evil. You got a little bit of everything in you, so you gotta rap about both—you gotta balance it out."

FUTURE RHYTHM

"This is the first hip-hop album recorded in a tapeless studio. It's like one long digital sample," Shock G says of the group's achievement. While they're not mad scientists, the members of Digital Underground are fascinated by technology. A prime example is their best known album, *Sex Packets.* Released in 1990 (years before marketing firms began their assault on the public's ears with the now played prefix, "Cyber"), the album featured a title track about a peddler of black-market software (the Packet Man). This software allowed the user to have a virtual sexual experience with the individual of their choosing. This is a full five years before *Strange Days,* a movie featuring a similar plot, was released. [Shock actually got the concept for the platinum selling album from a member of Digital Underground, Smooth, who he says was at one time attempting to raise money to manufacture some prototype packets. Shock says his man had a proposal worked out but he (Shock) advised him against taking it to anyone for fear that the idea for the packets would be stolen from him.]

As techno-hip as they are themselves, awareness of the current technology gap that exists in Black and Latino communities across this country hasn't escaped their many eyes. However, they feel it's only a temporary situation. "Right now," Shock says, "we don't have time to sit and ponder and play with that shit 'cause most brothers is tryin' to get their rent paid. We're at the bottom of the heap in the United States. So, a nigga don't have time to sit down and exploit this software, or to exploit these different ideas, because by the

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> "You know what's unreal? A whole world where all you know is straight up positivity or all you know is straight up negativity. We're not tryin' to be Luke widdit, but we're not tryin' to be X-Clan either."

time we sit there, you gotta feed these kids."

They're somewhat optimistic about the situation though. Whereas they acknowledge the relative scarcity of computer- or technology-literate brothers and sisters, they feel that when the time comes, those who can will represent using direct and indirect methods. Therefore, they see Digital Underground and this album in particular as an example. "The objective of the album," Shock says, "is to re-rig the New World Oda—I call it 'oda' instead of 'order' because that shit smells bad for us."

This wariness about how technology will be used, who will be using it and to what end, are common themes to the group members. "Europeans' whole program is weapons and security," Shock says. "There was a time when we [Africans] had superior knowledge of technology. Knowing too much technology would be out of harmony and was a threat to mankind."

Digital Underground is equally concerned with new laws which they feel are racist. "We're in a police state," Money B says. "They have a law where they can pull you over if your glasses on the side are an inch thick—they say it messes-up your peripherals. They know niggas wear glasses and it's the style of our glasses that [they] are thick on the sides. It messes up your peripheral vision—riiight," he says, throat coated with sarcasm.

COAST TO COAST

We're all by now too familiar with the East coast vs. West coast soap opera being played out before us weekly in print, on screen and on the radio. Though it's probably intended to be viewed as an epic struggle between two mighty camps, locked in the eternal etc., etc., it usually comes off like one of those low budget, off-brand action flicks we see on cable, and that's basically how people deal with it: they get pissed 'cause the shit is on again or they shake their heads, snickering with disbelief at the bad predictable dialogue. In any case, they change the channel.

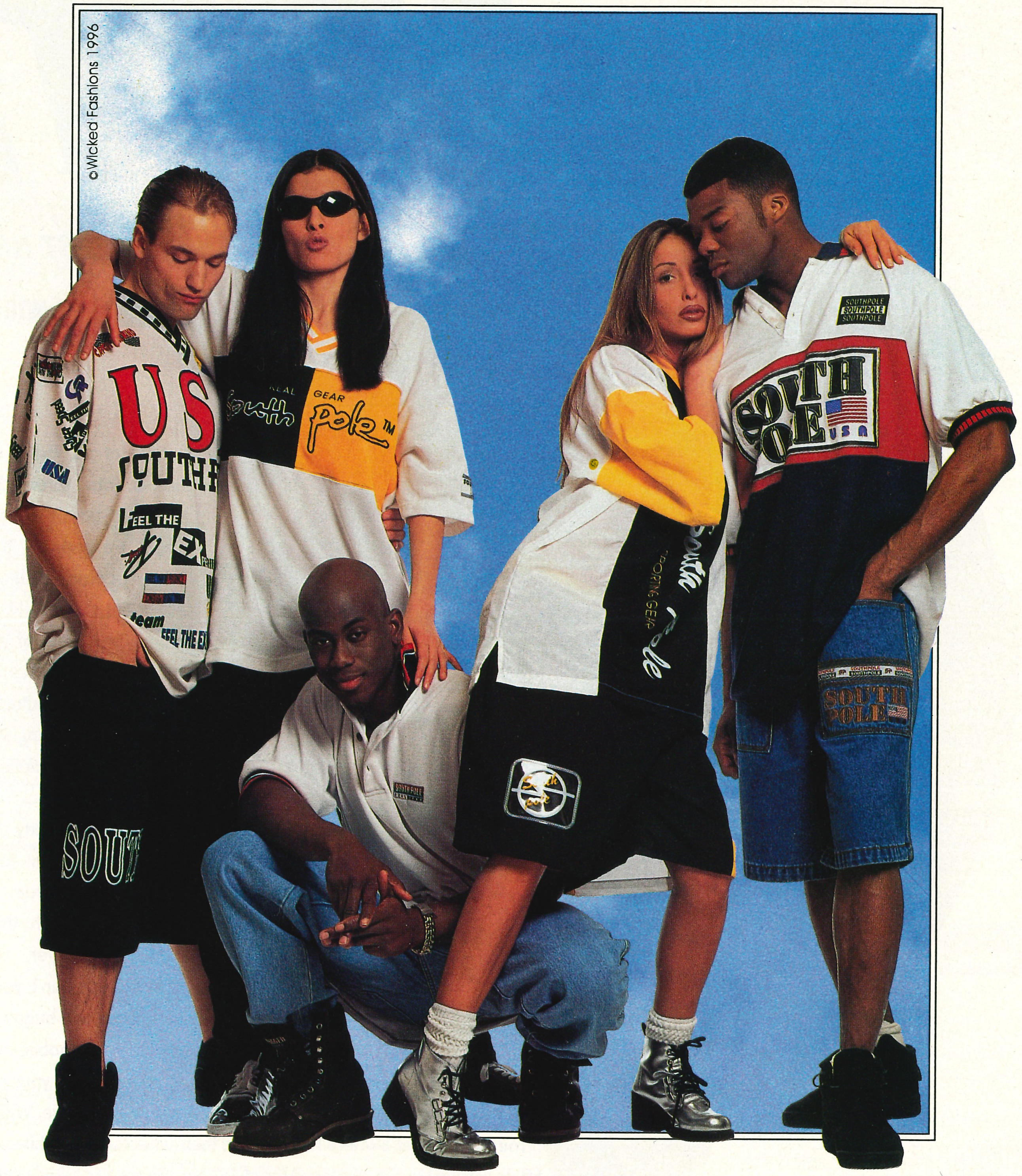
But, as corny and distracting as this drama is, it would be dishonest to say that it's without historical precedent. There's an old jazz legend that's similar, "and it goes a little somethin' like this": Once upon a backinnaday, a young trumpeter named Miles Dewey Davis released an album called *Birth of the Cool*. Innovations on this particular album were addressed by all the mighty axemen of the day, but whereas the cats back East responded with a harder, faster, louder sound, the cats out West went softer, improvised less. As a result, the West coast players of this brand of so-called "Cool Bop," were said to lack swing and soul (translation: they weren't "hardcore"). And, "It was on." There were individuals like Charles Mingus, a monster bassist and one of this country's great composers, who shat on this silliness with swinging bands composed of anyone whom he felt could play his "stormy and funky blues."

Like Mingus' mighty bands, Digital Underground is composed of cats from both coasts and some places between, so they necessarily take a similar view. While they represent the West coast to the fullest, they maintain many East coast ties. Tyranny is from Brooklyn; Money B spent his many of his formative years in Philly; Shock lived in Pittsburgh, and as a shorty prowled the streets of Queens. Rapping with any of the members of the band about the history of hip-hop you're as likely to hear references to Spoonie G and Grand Wizard Theodore as Eazy-E, Dr. Dre and Too Short. They treat the history of this music and its masters with the same respect Branford Marsalis or Roy Hargrove treats jazz musicians and history. These things combined give them a broad view of a marketing campaign gone bad.

Shock attempts to explain what's happening by expounding on the love N.W.A received when they first hit. "Special Ed, who I swear by—he's one of my favorite rappers—was talkin' about, 'I got a dog with a solid gold bone.' That's cool, but that's fantasy... Big Bank Hank flyin' through the air, 'I can rock a mike,' etc. But when N.W.A said, 'We couldn't get no play from the ladies/ With six niggas in the car is you crazy/ She was scared and it was showin', so we said fuck you bitch and kept rollin',' every nigga in America know they done been there! But it took a while for people to catch up." Money B elaborates on Shock's point, explaining that West coast hip-hoppers generally have a broader view of hip-hop's history because they listen to West coast hip-hop, East coast hip-hop and everything between.

But, it's Bed-Stuy native Tyranny, sounding like Mingus must have when he was in the same situation, who puts it best: "All this East coast-West coast shit—that's myth! That's bullshit! Digital Underground don't represent the bullshit. We represent reality..." Ⓢ

SOUTH POLE



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Traffic Jam

HOW YOUR FAVORITE ARTISTS FILL THEIR BASSEST NEEDS

By Todd Williams

For most of us, living can be divided into three decided parts. One third spent in bed. Perhaps a third at school or work. And the final installment of the daily grind is behind the wheel of a car—which in most cases means you're stuck in gridlock, endlessly station surfing for hip-hop, while inhaling tailpipe carcinogens from surrounding vehicles. Not a pretty picture. Especially if you're not fortunate enough to own a true driving machine, equipped with the bare essentials: AC, CD player, sunroof, power windows. And if you don't, you might as well be riding in a horse and buggy.

For the car connoisseur, the automobile addicted, the gear heads, customizing your car to fit your needs is an American tradition as old as sweet potato pie. With this in mind, many car owners have turned their wheels into mobile works of art. Is comfort being sacrificed for style? No, the car nut takes great pains to ensure the most comfortable trip for himself and those lucky enough to ride along. Filled with every modern convenience available—phone, t.v., state-of-the-art security—the automobile becomes a home away from home.

These climate controlled, smoke-free, self-enclosed habitats are no longer just a utilitarian mode of transportation, they're outlets of personal expression. Today, man and car are now inseparable. And at the heart of the man-machine relationship is a phat system.

ALL PHOTOS OF TASH BY KEN HOLLIS

CATASHTRAFE –THE ALKAHOLIKS 1989 Mercedes Benz 300E

Receiver: detachable Kenwood KRC-701 cassette and cd player

Amps: Sherwood XA-11 1100-watt amp and an Alpine amp

Speakers: 15" Kicker subwoofer tube; six custom Alpine 6 x 9" speakers

Installer: Soundsgood in LA, 818-999-4523

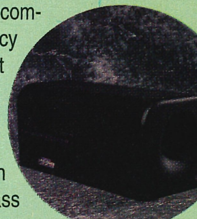
Approximate Investment: $3,000

A funny thing happened to me: "I fell asleep one night on the 101 Freeway in LA. When I woke up my car was smashing into the median wall on the driver's side, then it forced my car across lanes into the left wall. Through it all though—after the car was totaled—the Ol' Dirty CD never stopped playing or even skipped a beat... Man!! I thought Ol' Dirty would have stopped me from falling asleep!!!"

AUTOWARE

New Car Audio and Video Products to Ease Your Ride

Compiled by Todd Williams



Bass is the final frontier in car stereos. And no system would be complete without a low frequency bass kicker. Unlike most enclosed woofers, the **Kicker Powered Substation PSR80** ($499; 800-256-5425) has a built-in 80-watt amp for optimum bass response.

The next time you're stuck in your car wondering what bit of gossip Oprah's dishing up, tune in on a **Clarion 6" VMA-9181 full-color LCD screen** ($1500; 800-462-5274). Or if you're Mortal Kombat addicted, jack-in a game system—Sega or Play station—and practice your deadly moves all the way home. Caution: talk-show viewing while driving can cause nausea!

Protecting your car and valuables these days can be cumbersome: key chain alarms, removable radios, the club, etc. Luckily, someone figured out the two can serve the same purpose. When you detach the face of a **Pioneer Premier DEH-59 CD-Receiver With Alarm** ($460; 800-PIONEER), a high-frequency alarm is activated; and when you re-attach the faceplate it automatically disables the alarm and reengages a booming 35-watt x 4-channel system.

How many times have you asked your co-driver: "Where the hell are we?" But they're as lost as you: "I don't know!" You'd probably feel better if the **Kenwood KNA-V10 Navigation System** ($1200; 800-KENWOOD) answered. The unit can give instructions on where to turn, approximate milage or alternate routes in heavy traffic. Better yet, the KNA-V10 doesn't take up much room: once the Kenwood KDC-8003 CD-Receiver loads the CD-ROM, pull it out and pop in a normal CD.

For every little illegal move law-breakers make, law enforcement is right in step. Take, for example, modern speed detection devices, which enlist a number of bands— X, K, Ka superwide band—to scan our highways and byways. Lead footers are at the mercy of very zealous state

CONTINUED ON PAGE 63

ALL PHOTOS OF CHRIS KELLY BY TAMARA RAFKIN

CHRIS KELLY –KRIS KROSS
1994 Mercedes Benz S320

Receiver: Sony XR-340 control, Sony CDX-65 10-disc changer

Amps: 200ix and 4 channel (80 watts) 4080 Rockford Fosgate

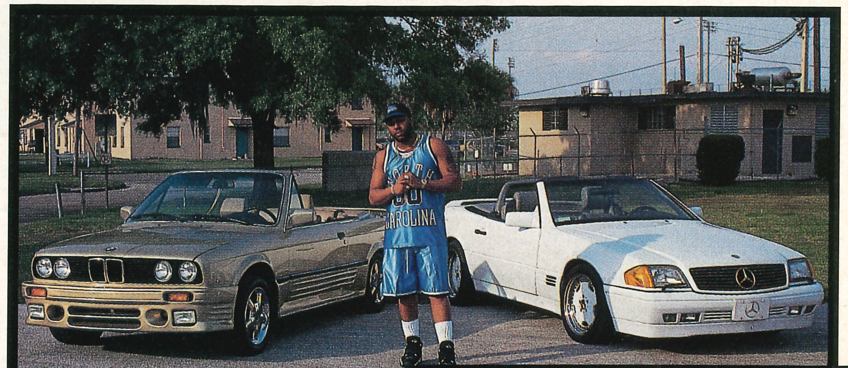
Speakers: PCH-815 Rockford Fosgate woofers, 3 pairs of 218-CX MB Quart

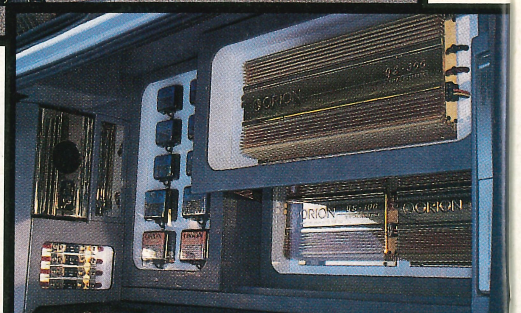
Installer: Cartunes in Atlanta, 404-256-5600

Approximate Investment: $6,000

A funny thing happened to me: "I took this girl to the prom. While I was upstairs in the hotel one of my tires went flat. So I called my boy Chris to come get me and he wouldn't; then I called Jermaine and he left me out there, too. Finally, I walked across the street where no one could see me and I hopped in a cab."

MAGIC MIKE –PRESIDENT OF CHEETAH RECORDS
1992 Mercedes Benz 500SL
1991 BMW 325ic





Receiver: Sony in-dash player, Sony CDX 6000-SP control unit, Sony CDX-A15 10-disc player 9 (BMW); Sony MDX-U1 Mini Disc Player, Sony CDX-71 10-disc player (Mercedes)

Amps: HiFonics Hercules 200 watts, HiFonics Europa 120 watts, HiFonics Plato Crossover EQ (BMW); Orion GS300 300watts, 2x Orion GS-100

Speakers: 4 x 1" Orion XTRS tweeters, 4 x 5" Orion XTR mid-range, 2 x 12" Orion XTR sub-woofers (BMW); 4 x 1" Orion XTRS tweeters, 4 x 5" Orion XTR mid-range, 2 x 12" Orion XTR subwoofers (Mercedes)

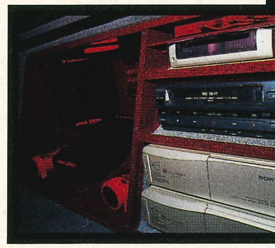
Installer: Audio Excellence in Orlando, FL, 407-277-8790

Approximate Investment: $65,000 (Benz system); $10,000 (BMW system)

A funny thing happened to me: "I had entered my Benz in a car show and someone asked me if this was Magic Mike's car because whose ever this is, 'it's phat and I don't stand a chance.' I told him, 'I don't know whose car it is!' After I won the award for best system, he realized it was mine and wasn't so pissed off."

JERMAINE DUPRI –PRESIDENT OF SO SO DEF RECORDINGS
1996 Range Rover

ALL PHOTOS OF JERMAINE DUPRI BY TAMARA RAFKIN



Receiver: Sony XRC-720 control unit, 2 Sony CDX-71 10-disc changers

Amps: 2 x 100IX Rockford Fosgate

Speakers: MB Quart Comp series 6 x 6" mid-range, 6 x 5" mid-range, 6 x 1" tweeters, 4 x 12" Solarbaric woofers

Miscellaneous: Sony SVX-20 hi-fi VHS, Sony Playstation, Sony NVX-F160 Mobile Navigation System w/5" color monitor, 2 x 5" Audiovox Flex Vision System color monitors

Installer: Cartunes in Atlanta, 404-256-5600

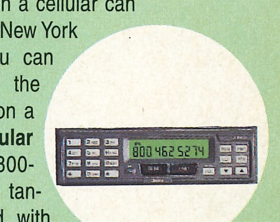
Approximate Investment: $17,000

A funny thing happened to me: "I was pulled over the other day by this cop. He thought I was too young to be driving, which really meant that he thought I stole the car. Once he realized it was me, he let me go, but not before asking for an autograph."

AUTOWARE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

troopers, unless you have a **Cobra Trapshooter RDL-216SWS** ($299; 800-Cobra-22) that monitors all bands simultaneosly as well as picks up signals from police and emergency workers, utilizing the Safety Alert feature.



Driving and chatting on a cellular can be as dangerous as a New York City pothole. But you can keep both hands on the steering wheel while on a **Clarion In-Dash Cellular Telephone** ($650; 800-462-5274). There's no tangled cord to contend with, just speak into the built-in microphone or hit one of the 30 speed-dial numbers to ring a friend.

If your trunk is already stuffed to the gills with subwoofers, tweeters and other grease monkey clutter, then where will you put your amp? The **Alpine Amplifier MRH-F255** ($325; 800-ALPINE1) has a low profile chassis that will fit under the seat of most compact cars or trucks. Boasting five channels and a dedicated mono sub-woofer output channel, this little baby can still power your system with 20% less voltage than other comparable amps and leave you room to spare.

Does size really matter? Not in the case of **Sony's CDX-T65 CD Changer** ($450; 800-352-7669). At approximately half the size of a typical 10-disc changer—meaning in-car storage instead of the trunk—the CDX-T65 is equipped with all standard functions, 8x oversampling, and even the unique ESP feature for better performance on the roughest of roads.

You can have in-studio sound quality under your dash without gargantuan monitors. Here's your answer: **JBL's 504GTi Component System** ($350; 800-336-4525). It has coaxial speakers which mount the tweeter in front of the woofer for better sound (convential speakers mount them side-by-side). Constructed of materials normally found on a battleship, the speakers are virtually distortionless and indestructible. Directional cones made of Kevlar reduce mid-range distortion at high levels; pure titanium domes can sustain high frequency with almost no distortion; and ferrofluid cooling increases tweeter power without overheating. Ⓢ

SUE KWON

BY KIERNA MAYO DAWSEY

3 wise men

USING REAL LIFE AS THE LESSON, A REBORN DE LA SOUL STEPS UP, WISES UP AND TAKES IT UP ANOTHER NOTCH WITH ALBUM NUMBER FOUR, *STAKES IS HIGH*

"Peace and success to the MCs who still place thought in their music cuz there's not a lot of us left. Then again it's not nice to point," writes Posdnuos, lead rapper of De La Soul, in the liner notes of the group's 1993 third album, *Buhloone Mind State*.

Today, three years later, he admits through rather revealing body language—a slump here, an intense stare there—that it is terribly painful and yet strangely cathartic for him to look back over those turbulent years since that album's release. For him and his partners, close examination of that time proves heart-wrenching (because they know they created a great album) and thought-provoking (because, well, did they?). Today, three Black men are collectively reviewing their past and hoping, planning, praying for their future. Though De La Soul's record sales have actually been declining steadily since their seminal, nearly-platinum 1989 debut, *3 Feet High and Rising* (*De La Soul is Dead* tipped off at gold), it is the failure, if you will, of *Mind State* that was most significant.

That album was to disprove the notion that they were slipping. That album was the reclamation of their old selves—De La Soul, it was to say, was very much alive and more creative than ever.

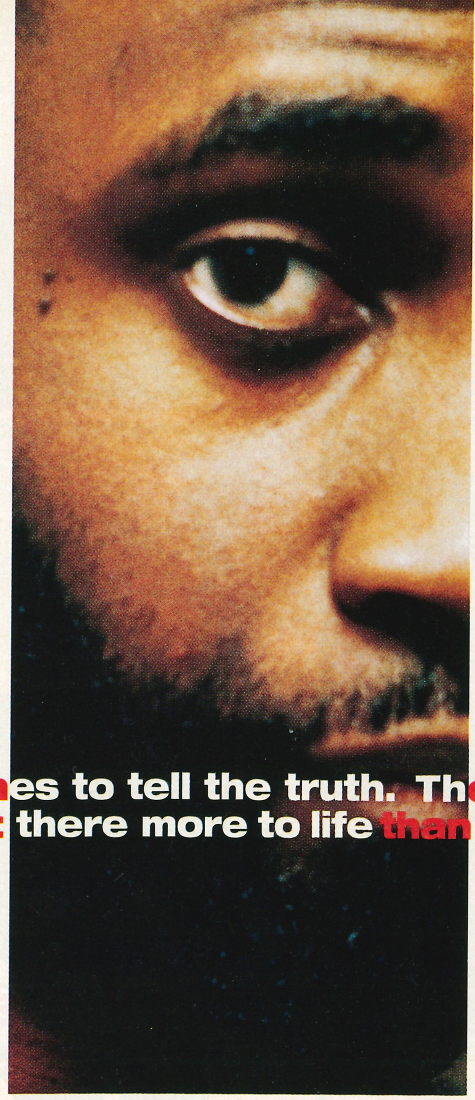
Tommy Boy, the group's infamous record label says that the unsung *Buhloone Mind State* sold close to 350,000 units, give or take a few thousand. Solid figures for a debut group, or an "underground" group, but not for De La Soul who, let's face it, were hardly freshmen and never underground. Slow sales left their dismayed record label little choice but to release only a couple of singles. Such hard work and inventive thought—for *Buhloone Mind State*, De La collaborated with Biz Markie, saxophone great Maceo Parker and even some Japanese rappers, SDP and Takagi Kan—all for naught.

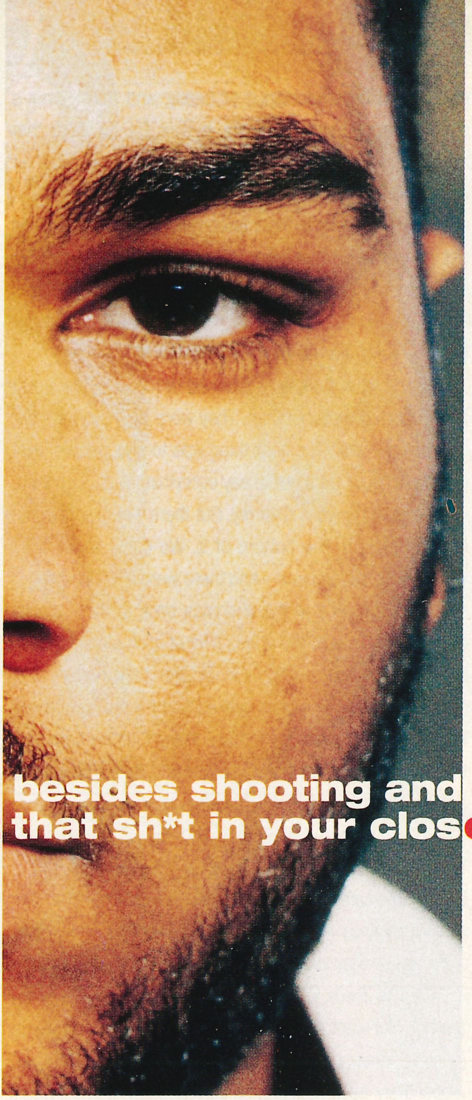
The undeniable reality sprayed the trio like a raging automatic weapon. "I'm hit!" the group seemed to say. After an overseas tour with the Pharcyde and A Tribe Called Quest, Pos got deathly ill with spinal meningitis. Everything was becoming maddening. Subsequently, he also suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for two months.

Pos recollects the time he first discovered things might be going awry: "I remember us being out in California doing a show. Our manager at the time, Lyor Cohen and RUSH, were having this meeting [and called us in]. The meeting was bugging me out. I was like, 'Why is this happening? I think we're doing good. Why are we in this room talking 'bout our album is too complicated?' That's when I really started seeing that the sales weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing."

Indeed, by 1993 much had changed since their rocket-paced launch four years earlier, since three Long Island teenagers—Posdnuos, Trugoy the Dove and DJ Maseo (Plugs 1, 2 & 3) were sitting on top of the world.

Now, it seemed, the world was flat.





"We were always the ones to tell the truth. There are other things going on besides shooting and smoking weed. Ain't there more to life than Versace, Moët and Alizé? Put that sh*t in your closet sometimes, my kids don't need to hear it."

Finding Answers

Was the album good? Did they make mistakes? Were they abandoned by their record label? Did their fans betray them? These and other similar questions are what race across the minds of three young brothers, bound together not by blood but by an intensely shared history, when asked, simply, "What went wrong?"

On a snowy, April day in New York City, De La Soul sit casually in a broken circle in the stuffy lounge of Platinum Island Recording Studios, and in between glances at videos on BET, begin to answer the challenging question. One thing is certain, "we learned a lot," says Dove. And each lesson, he contends, will be worth its weight in gold.

"In between the last album and this one we went through a rebuilding state," Dove continues. "Hiring and firing, rerouting things, thinking about working at home for a good three or four months instead of being out on the road to make money. Going hungry for a couple of months or so instead of being out. And trying to be as tight a unit as we knew we could be, but were just too lazy to do. It was a definite setback, we had to try to paint a better picture come next time."

See, even as seven-year veterans of the rap game, De La had to do what every rap group that wishes to survive will have to do—learn the business. Now a cliché among rappers and their fans, "learning the business" is still far from easy. You forget. You really do get caught up in the hectic lifestyles—the long studio sessions, the constant pages, the tour dates, the sound checks, the new friends, the old ones.

To compound matters, learning the business can also prove intimidating and discouraging. As De La Soul recently acknowledged, it often seems much easier not to even try. Mastering the legal terms and the right questions to ask promotion, marketing and A&R executives can be like studying for a standardized test. For many young rappers (read: young Black men/women) foraging into the world of music business is alien primarily because it requires developing relationships and rapports with people who usually don't understand them (read: white folks). For De La, that too, was real.

For the Long Island trio, learning the business ultimately meant attempts at morphing into a finely-tuned scale—one that would carefully balance the pressure to create on one side, and on the other, the pressure to win.

Industry Rules

Consequently, Pos, Dove and Maseo are sometimes rough on Tommy Boy Records and, of course, they contend that sometimes Tommy Boy is rough on them. They have a litany of complaints about their early treatment by the label that launched other groundbreaking groups like Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force and Digital Underground. However, even in their forthright critique of the company that provided their start, the men make honest attempts at acknowledging their own shortcomings.

ALL PHOTOS BY SUE KWON

Dove: "It was frustrating because we started out in a business where we were young, and the understanding of it was to do what you enjoy and make money doing it. No one ever said, 'this is the business end of it and this what you really have to concentrate on.' With everybody amping up the fun and the money, [my mind] was so clouded that I didn't even say to myself, 'maybe I should know who is up at Tommy Boy doing this and running that.' It was an anger [we had], because people [at the label] would turn to you and say, 'We understand you guys, we know you guys, we're in your career with you, helping you.'"

Maseo: "That's how it was introduced to us, like we were supposed to be some family. 'Welcome to the Tommy Boy family.' 'Welcome to the RUSH [management] family.'"

Dove: "But we were treated like step-children getting jerked out of some inheritance or something. . ."

". . .They are really supportive of what we do at the starting gate, but after the whistle's been blown, they start slacking. I think in a way we did a disfavor to ourselves and just let it happen. We were so locked into a pattern of putting an album out, waiting a little, doing a video, going on tour, coming back home."

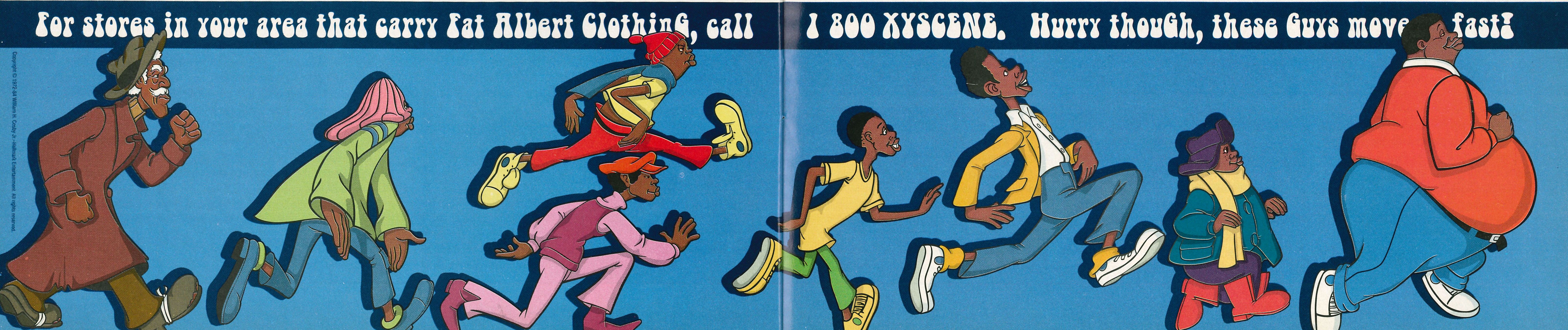
"You can always stop and say you love certain people at the label. Overall, I could never discredit Tommy Boy as a whole. But there are times when they do show you this is a business—this really isn't family. But in turn, if this is a business, then let's do business for real. . ."

"Tommy Boy has been lucky to have that artist or group that has that song that makes it happen right then and there. From Naughty by Nature to House of Pain. For a long time they felt like that's the way to do things—*let* it happen, don't *make* it happen. It just couldn't work that way for De La Soul 'cause we were so diverse. There's an understanding now. In order to see work done for you, you have to be a part of it."

De La Soul will admit that Tommy Boy was initially reluctant to support their current project. In fact, they say it wasn't until they ripped a show at the Gavin [a music industry conference] that Tom Silverman(label CEO) was present at, that they had thoroughly convinced the label they were still worth getting excited about. "Before that we didn't know when our album was coming out. I personally don't know how close we would have been to putting this album out if [Silverman] hadn't seen the show."

Pos acknowledges that that show may have changed the course of events, but it helped, he adds, that the three of them had sat down beforehand and did some soul-searching.

Pos: "I'd be playing violins if I said we came together and huddled and just got everything back [after *Buhloone Mind*



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> "They can define us as either wack or dope, but at least they got to understand what we saying. I'm putting myself together through this album," asserts Pos.

NITRO

State]. But we did come together and realize, 'Yo man, we gotta do certain things to get down. We got to take into consideration not only our art and our artistic views, [we have to] look at what's going on outside of us.' Here it is we put together something and when it's put out [because we weren't] paying attention to what's really going on outside and we didn't realize that 'yo, maybe someone don't want to sit down and decipher a whole album.'"

"Tommy Boy has put that to us in a lot of ways and we were like, 'yeah, we know that.' I'd be thinking, 'We're De La Soul. *3 Feet High and Rising* pulled it off, we'll be alright next time around.' I felt hurt, like there was a lot of stuff on *Buhloone Mind State* that people never even got to hear."

Maseo: "At the end of the day I can say we were really happy that things didn't take off the way everyone expected, 'cause then maybe we wouldn't be in touch the way we are now."

Lyrics

Stakes is High may prove to be De La's most talked about album—the already phenomenal writers have dared pump up their skills. The New York Times once reported that De La Soul were the "hands-down champs of thinking person's hip-hoppers." Don't look for them to mince words, they don't. While the group's infamous complexity is watered down slightly this time, it is only in the name of clarity. Now, they rely on fewer layered metaphors, opting instead to bring it straight to your face.

"This time around I got more arrogant when it comes to letting people know don't fuck with me when it come to lyrics," asserts Pos. "They can define us as either wack or dope, but at least they got to understand what we saying. I'm putting myself together through this album."

Prince Paul, De La Soul's mentor and long-time producer, stepped off this project; it was he that brought a great deal of the group's signature zany element. This album will *not* be ignored; in fact, some other famous rappers may even feel a need to speak to it. "You can never shun the truth and it isn't us that's gonna have to deal with it. It's them," says Dove about the possibility that some artists may take offense to his rather blunt lyrics.

He continues: "If we were lying it'd be different. Those people who are really going to be like, 'this is me that they're talking about,' then, you know, so be it. Whether it's talking it out, whether it's applauding us for taking that stand, whether you have beef, we can't control that. Whatever happens happens. We were always the ones to tell the truth. I don't appreciate people lying to my kids. If we all gonna be in this together and we all trying to get paid and do music, let's have a bit of respect for what we're doing and the people listening to it."

"I know everybody wakes up and yawns. I know people wash their clothes and people mow the lawn sometimes. I mean we ain't gotta rap about that, but there are other things going on besides shooting and smoking weed. Ain't there more to life than Versace, Moët and Alizé? Put that shit in your closet sometimes, my kids don't need to hear it."

The group says if there was a "rap law" that stated you couldn't rhyme about clothes, cars, money, guns or fantasies, there'd be about "50 groups right now who'd be out the game."

Buddies

If hip-hop nostalgia moves you, then the energy in a photographer's West Side Highway studio might blow you away. De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest and the Jungle Bros. meet again. In reality, they'd been meeting long before the late March photo session, but now, as Pos reveals on the new album, "the Native Tongues has officially been reinstated."

Certainly as friends, they take one another for granted. Looking at one another, they don't at all see hip-hop nostalgia, they don't note the years, the history, (the pounds) between them. They don't stare at each other and marvel, "Gee, he helped launch my career." And although spectators fortunate enough to remain once the feverish photo session winds down secretly long for it, there's no way anyone is about to break out into a classic "Buddy" rendition.

Don't be silly, that was then and this is now.

"We were kids then," admits Afrika "Baby Bam" of the Jungle Bros. "Now, we're grown." Today Afrika is proudly married with two children and says that he and his long-time partner Mike G are off hiatus and are working on a single.

"But this is the only way this [the reunion] could have happened. It's their vibe, you know," he adds about his boys, De La Soul. Q-Tip seconds that sentiment: "They understand the importance of family, and *that's* what's special about them." Indeed, it was De La Soul that decided they didn't want to neglect their bond with their extended family any longer.

Dove explains how small beefs and personal problems led the collective that originally consisted of De La, Tribe and the JBs, (and grew to include Black Sheep, Busta Rhymes, and Queen Latifah), to dissolve. They felt the loss, he says, but so did all of their fans.

Dove: "A lot of fans were stunned by [divisive] lyrics that made them question things. They were like, 'where's the collaboration at?' The best thing was to give people what they want. But that's not to say everything was cool, there were a lot of things in disarray. But there was a light in our hearts to get to the bottom of it. We came together to work out the differences—and there were a lot. We've had several meetings and it just comes back to the fact that everybody was kids, there was a lot of confusion in the air. But, we were true family. I slept over their house, they slept at mine. Their moms cooked and my moms cooked. I mean we was sincerely family." In front of the cameras, the friends who went from boys to men, spill all over one another, laughing and chilling and laughing.

The Future

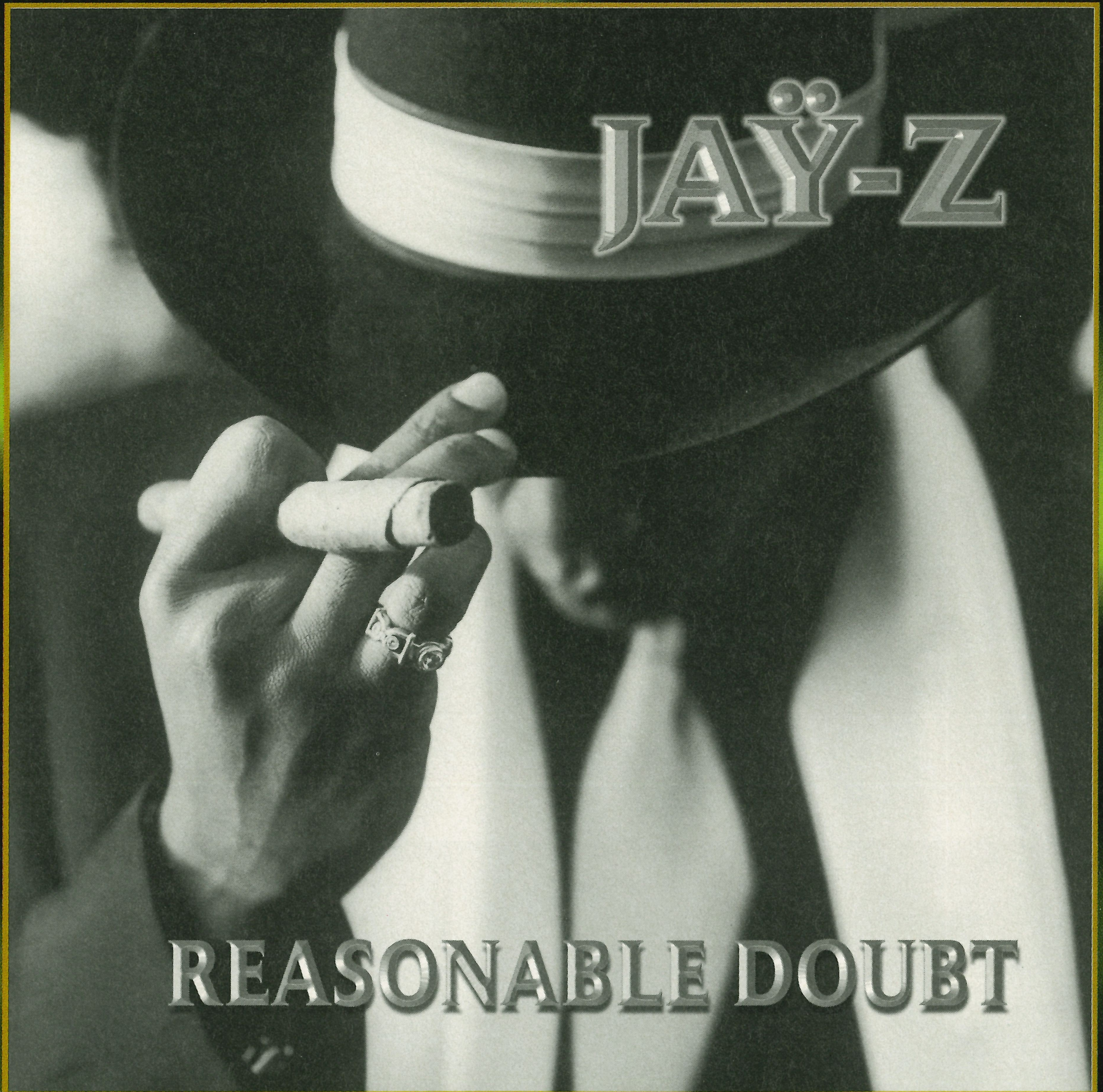
De La Soul can't and won't pretend not to know that their very significance in hip-hop is often questioned. And it is true, once again, they are emerging in times that will likely be resistant to them. Gun-clappers, players, big willies—they are not. But what they *are*—both ingenious and ingenuous (qualities rarely possessed simultaneously)—may very well propel them back to that once familiar place, a place where a legendary rap group with arguably more brilliance than any one of their peers belongs—the top of the charts.

Though at one point in time one-word descriptions of the trio may have been appropriate, today there is a great deal of irony in the notion that De La Soul are "hippies." The fact is, the carefree spirit that that label connotes is quite the opposite of De La's aura. Time and circumstance have forced tremendous pressure on the group, even if the greatest pressure comes from them. They are all fathers, and truthfully speaking, it doesn't take much time with them to discover that this is what consumes most of their thought.

When their confidence level faltered, De La Soul reconsidered having to face the public once again. But they proved that every good-bye ain't gone. Hip-hop is not dead as Pos, the eternal cynic, likes to say. Tomorrow is a new day. And today, one year after the conception of their newest baby, the brothers are in position and ready to take off.

De La Soul are tired this evening; it shows in their pudgy faces. But, damn if they're not happy. Tommy Boy is happy. Their friends are happy. ("This album is *good*," brags Q-Tip.)

Now if due to some strange twist of events, nothing else gets you hype off of the group's latest project, the first single and title track, "Stakes Is High," will for two very good reasons: first, the remarkable bassline, and second, the remarkable bottom line—Posdnuos says it (and comprehends it) best: "Man, life can get all up in your ass/ baby you better work it out. . ." Ⓢ



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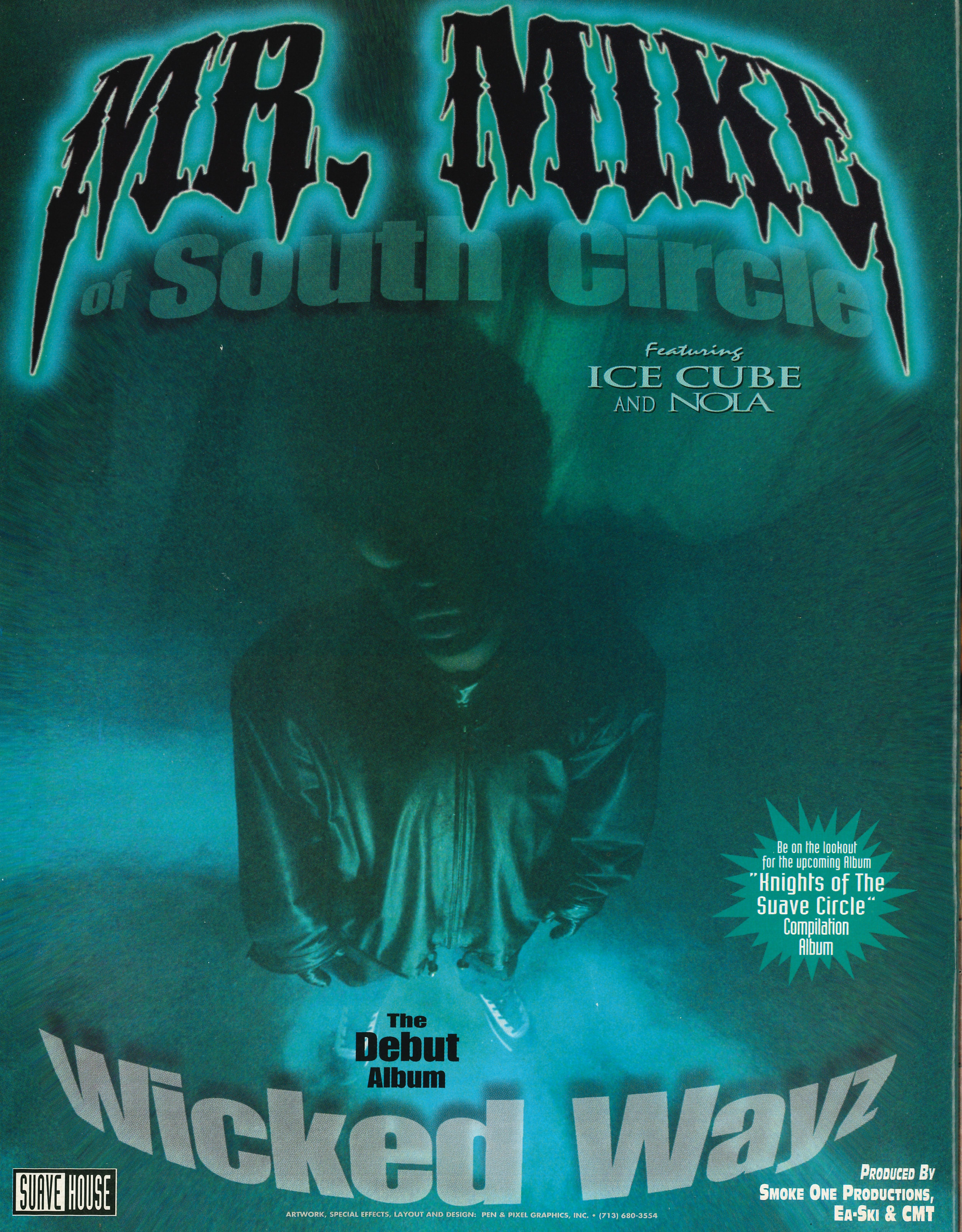

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LIFE AFTER DEATH

ARGUABLY ONE OF THIS GENERATION'S MOST TALENTED AND PROLIFIC PRODUCERS, DR. DRE DEPARTS FROM HISTORY-MAKING DEATH ROW RECORDS. IN THE PROCESS, HE POTENTIALLY SHIFTS THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, CREATES A NEW POSSIBILITY FOR "POP CULTURE" AND EMBARKS UPON A NEW CHAPTER IN THE DRAMA THAT IS THE LIFE OF A SUPERSTAR.

"It is not the critic that counts. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. . . who at best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievements and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place will never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. . ."

—Theodore Roosevelt

Life after death. . . those three words are swimming feverishly around in my head as I swerve in my bucket gold VW Jetta down the freeway on a Sunday afternoon in Los Angeles. I'm wondering if Dr. Dre has considered all the possibilities of something so unexplored as the rebirthing of a man. A new life. A chance to start over.

For about three months now, it seems as if the whole world wants to catch up with hip-hop's most successful producer. Once he departed Death Row Records, the label he co-owned and founded with Suge Knight in 1992, Dre went underground. Since the March breakup he hasn't spoken a word to anyone. A page to your sister's friend who knows Dre or a beep to Dre's assistant himself still didn't work. But while the world is gossiping about everything from him getting beat down by Tupac Shakur and Suge, to him fearing for his life, Dre was finding his center. Hanging out at the ocean near Malibu to clear his thoughts, or sitting blazed up in the studio thinking about making money.

While a few grumbled that he was upset with the musical direction at Death Row Records, Dre was actually laying out his own blueprint for a new label filled with surprises. Expect lyrical gifts from MCs like nasal-voiced Nas and a rattlesnake-tongued cutie named Foxxy Brown. Look for him to delve a little deeper into R&B with a silky voiced brother named Ruben Munoz. And he promises too, a song that will end the East coast, West coast drama forever.

So, from the ruins of the music industry's most important recent shakeup, come the words from the architect himself. Dr. Dre. Raw and uncensored. Without Snoop. . . without Suge shadowing him. . . and without Death Row Records.

HIDING OUT AT HOME?

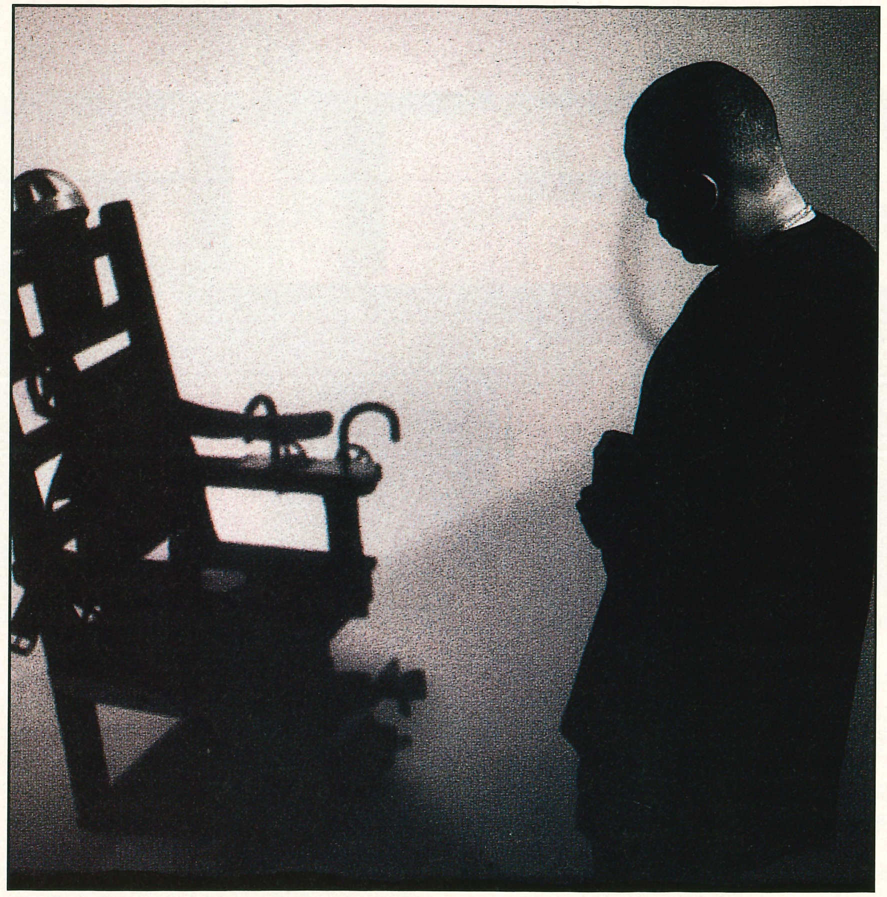
In hot ass Calabasas, a suburb just 40 minutes north of downtown L.A., I turn into the driveway of Dre's complex. An older white couple clutching tennis rackets bops by my car. I think: this snooty scene must be radically different from Dre and Suge's childhood in Compton.

Up a steep winding hill and two turns later, I see the modest sized two-level crib. It's obviously an expensive spot, but it looks more like track housing for the rich. The crib is lavishly understated in a black and gold theme with glass mirrors everywhere. In some places the glass reaches from the ceiling to the floor. Every few seconds you bump into your own reflection. The decor fits Dre. It's not overtly self aggrandizing, just proud and low key. Vintage Andre Young.

The house is fairly immaculate save for jugs of Hennessy and Bacardi sharing space with a two-liter of Pepsi on a counter. A pool room is filled with artwork reminiscent of the slinky Black figures on those *Good Times* paintings. There are photos of Dre's children everywhere, and also a photo of a fine 30-ish looking Black woman. This is Dre's girlfriend Nicole, who lives here with him and her son Tyler.

Gazing at the walls is like a tour de force of Dre's career. Platinum albums, not the big gaudy ones, cover the walls. JJ Fad, DOC, N.W.A, *Doggystyle*, *The Chronic*, *Murder Was The Case*, the *Above the Rim* and *Friday* soundtracks, and probably some shit I didn't see. Observing the plaques is like a West coast race through a decade of hip-hop.

Twenty minutes later, 31-year-old Dr. Dre bounces down the stairs holding a bag full of DAT's. He is wearing a short sleeved blue jean shirt and blue jeans. Two fat carat sized diamond earrings are in each ear. "I was having sex with my girl," he says laughing. "It takes her a long ass time to come, so I was trying to time it just right."



We immediately head to the driveway and jump in the Rover for a lunch in Malibu. Inside the car, Dre excitedly begins detailing some of his plans for the new album. "But first," he says, "let's listen to some of the new shit." The booming bass and violins on the cut he's playing force your neck into a nod, but it's the chant that will make the song blow up. A thunderous roar of brothers shout in the chorus: "EAST COAST KILLA, WEST COAST KILLA. . ." Dre grins and says we will talk about the song later during the interview.

Next he drops a tape into his DAT walkman, which is hooked to his pricey stereo. The sound of RBX's distinctive voice comes on saying in nursery rhyme style jest: "Tha Dogg Pound had a pimp. . ." Dre grins a little and says, "That's some crazy shit right? The worst part is they are all cousins. Snoop, Daz and RBX." I don't know whether to laugh myself or take Dre seriously. Especially when RBX continues on the record with one line jokes and portrays Tha Dogg Pound holed up in a hotel room with red underwear on, waiting for their pimp. I wonder to myself if this is referring to Suge. "Naw," Dre says again, "just playing around in the studio."

Food ordered at Gladstones, a well-known seafood restaurant right on the ocean, we immediately start chopping game. Like most folks, a few obvious questions have been etched in my notebook. . .

The Source: When you were on Ruthless Records, Eazy was the captain of the ship. You were putting most of the creative stuff down. But Eazy was still running it. Then at Death Row Records, again you were kinda putting most of the creative work down and Suge was there. Do you now want to put everything together from Dre's perspective?

Dr. Dre: It was just like it's time for Dre to look out for Dre. 'Cause Dre's been looking out for everybody else. Although a few people were looking out for me too. Everybody's in a position right now where they can do their own thing. I'm in a position where I can do my own thing and be crazy successful. So that's what I am going to do.

"I felt like I helped build Death Row up to a point where I didn't leave nobody high and dry. I am the one taking the risk. I stepped away from all that and started all the way over. I should look like one of the stupid ones, although they lost one of the best producers in the world."

Was there a point when you knew you had to roll out? Something that made you wanna leave Death Row? A particular incident? Or did you just wake up one day. . .

It wasn't nothing that happened. Actually, it was just an accumulation of a lot of little shit and it got to the point where I wasn't having fun (at Death Row) anymore. It's like I wanna go up to the studio and work and it's like 50 muthafuckas in the studio I don't know. They are all in your ear while you are trying to work. So I decided to just bounce.

Is that one of the reasons why you left? To get your own business?

It got to the point in the studio where brothers were sticking their hand out like, "Yo, what's up, we just signed to the label." And I was like, "I don't even know you." I feel like this: I made everybody a lot of money there. I made the people that I worked with at Death Row superstars. And gave 'em careers. Now they can move on and do their thang. And I am going to move on and do my thang.

So did you approach Jimmy Iovine from Interscope, or did he approach you?

I came at Jimmy (president of Interscope Records) about three months ago and he was into it. He's not losing shit, so why not. I wouldn't have went anywhere else. I got mad love for Interscope. Me and Jimmy are cool. He pays what he says he's going to pay and does what he says he's going to do. And that's all I ask for. Don't shoot me no bullshit.

Bullshit is Dre's buzz word today as he repeatedly gazes out the window and plays with the straw from his drink. Ridding himself of bullshit employees by firing accountants and lawyers. Cutting off bullshit niggas in his circle.

So after months of simmering poor relations with his seven-year friend and business partner Suge, Dre said he finally had enough. He sold his 50 percent share of the upstart independent label back to the brazen C.E.O. and has begun work on projects that he will have sole creative control over. Dre won't discuss the specifics of what he got for his shares in Death Row, but if the company is estimated at worth more than $100 million, take a guess on how much he got for his half.

The deal possibly complicates life for Interscope, which also is home to Death Row Records. Reached at his L.A. office, Iovine wouldn't talk money or details, but he maintained Dre's deal will in no way change Interscope's four year relationship and success with Suge.

"All this East coast/West coast shi*t has gotta be the most stupid sh*t I ever heard in life. It's just another way for motherfu**ers that don't have the skills they need to keep up with the times to sell records. So if you get on a record and you talking this East coast/West coast sh*t, it means you just trying to jump aboard this concept."

In fact, Dre's new label is a joint venture being funded in part by Interscope Records. Dre has already hired Kirdas Tucker, a former LaFace Records employee, as general manager, and is looking for A&R people and other employees. He's signed up fellow Compton rapper King Tee and squashed his beef with RBX, adding the rapper to his label. Most of the other artists are newcomers.

"When you work with new artists, there's no ego involved," Dre said about his decision to concentrate on unknown talent. "Motherfuckers are hungry and ready to get in there to work. And ready to take direction and advice. That's what I like. Then you can get a hit record. Let's say that I would have worked with Madonna or Michael Jackson. I would have been like the other 100 motherfuckers trying to work with them or submitting tracks. Dre ain't about that. I'm different."

The company is as yet untitled. Originally, Dre wanted to call his record label Black Market Records. But the name was already copyrighted by some Bay Area rappers. He tried buying them out, but they kept upping the ante from $100,000 to some outlandish figure. So as of this printing, Dre's label remains nameless.

What's certain is that he will release a compilation album to hits stores in late July or early August. Along with the earlier "East Coast. . ." joint, there will likely be cuts from Sam Sneed ("Think You Betta Recognize") and RBX.

Sources say Sneed is stuck in a legal battle to get out of his contract with Death Row. Sneed, who is from Pittsburgh, recently completed a video for a song called "Lady Heroine," scheduled to be released on Death Row. In the video, a number of East coast artists made cameos, but no West coast or Death Row artists appeared in it. This apparently became a point of tension and conflict between Sneed and the Death Row family, leading to his pursuit of a release from his contract.

NO LONGER STRANDED ON DEATH ROW

"I haven't talked to Suge in months. I hear all kinds of rumors. It's a million fucking rumors floating around. I've gotten shot. I've gotten beat up and all this ole' shit. Ain't nothing happened to me and ain't nothing gonna happen to me. Dre is at home and in the studio. That's it. I don't go to no clubs no more. I don't hang out. If I wanna hang out, it's just with the niggas that I know real good and we chill like that."

When a founder leaves his company and takes the blueprints with him, there's bound to be tension. And when that company is rap's most notorious and legally documented batch of crazy ass niggas, the career change is even more risky. Dre though, says he does not fear retaliation.

"Everybody knows where I live," he says emphatically. "I don't really think it's Suge mentality or Tupac's mentality. Just when the niggas come around. Niggas start pumping shit up. They are like, 'Aww nigga, you ain't gon' do shit about this nigga?' Both Suge and Tupac know I ain't never did shit but try to help both of them. We all stay paid like a motherfucker. We still doing the same shit, we just doing it on a different level now. A lot of the motherfuckers that are around Death Row are either jealous or miserable because they are not in the position that you are. They want shit to be fucked up. They want Suge and Tupac to be mad at Dre and want to get at me. That pumps them up. But I know deep down inside, niggas know what's up with Dre. That nigga look out. He made shit happen."

Pausing for a minute to collect his thoughts, Dre puts his departure into better perspective.

"I felt like I helped build Death Row up to a point where I didn't leave nobody high and dry," he continues. "They are at a point now where anything that come out on Death Row, people are gonna check it out. And I helped build that. If they put out hit records, I think it will be all good. I am the one taking the risk. I stepped away from all that and started all the way over. So I'm the one with the risk, not Death Row. I should look like one of the stupid ones, although they lost one of the best producers in the world. To me, that should make them work harder. If I had a dope ass producer and he's gone to do some new shit, I would be trying to prove something to him. Like, 'nigga, we can do this without you.' 'Cause I am definitely finna' show Death Row that I can make hit records just as big, if not bigger, on my own. It's all good."

But Dre, what about people like Snoop? You put Snoop down with Death Row. Why he didn't he come with you?

That's a difficult situation. Snoop is the most valuable asset at Death Row. He can't just walk away. You know what I mean? I wouldn't let him. Snoop is my boy and he's gonna be my boy forever. But that has nothing to do with business. It's all good. He came through my house and played me a couple of new cuts and all that. Who knows, maybe in the future we might work together again. Right now I'm just concentrating on all the new artists that I have, all the new Snoop Doggs. Not like that, but you know what I mean.

“Snoop is the most valuable asset at Death Row. He can't just walk away. I wouldn't let him. Snoop is my boy and he's gonna be my boy forever. But that has nothing to do with business.”

And in terms of anybody else at Death Row, you still cool with them? Dogg Pound or whoever else?

Everybody from the label has called me up since the split up. They were like, ‘Whatever happened, it's all good. We got your back. It's all love.’ Only people at Death Row that I give respect and props to are the people that were involved with *The Chronic* album, that's Death Row. Everybody else to me just saw the bandwagon and hopped on it to make some money.

Death Row Records has been unusually tight-lipped about the breakup. Suge said no to a comment. And in television and newspaper interviews, Snoop has opted to stay silent. Their publicist says relations are fine between the two factions. “Dre is still cool with everyone here,” said Death Row spokesman George Pryce. “This was a business decision and not an emotional thing.” There was no verbal parting of the ways between Suge and Dre. Rumors of an argument at a nightclub in L.A. are untrue, according to Dre. Dre simply got his lawyers to make calls and start the settlement process with Death Row's lawyers. The shocking split at the “Motown of the '90s” was played out in the back rooms of legal offices and supposedly never involved a fist fight.

Since its inception, Death Row Records has been the subject of controversy and praise. From Snoop's real life “Murder Was The Case” to C. Delores Tucker's grandma-like finger pointing that nudged Time Warner into dropping Interscope, Death Row has easily become the most talked about independent label of the 1990s.

The company was launched in 1992 after Dre felt he had been the victim of shifty business ways and wiggled his way out of a contract dispute with the Eazy E's Ruthless Records. With money Knight earned from the publishing rights of Vanilla Ice, he and Dre convinced Interscope to put them on. The result was a triple platinum platter that showcased Tha Dogg Pound, Lady of Rage and Snoop. Dre's layered funk, splashed with a dash of Parliament, did more than just boost his career, it firmly cemented his rep as rap's best producer of the moment. *The Chronic* had the music industry buzzing.

“*The Chronic* was not just what you heard but what went behind it,” Dre says fondly, remembering his comeback album. “And what we went through to make the motherfucker. That album had a lot of sentimental shit on it. Not just how many records it sold. Snoop's album sold more than *The Chronic,* but I think *The Chronic* is a better album. . . and had to set the standard. The whole second side of Snoop's album was done in two days. We went through about nine fifths of Hennessy. We was up for like two days. I was under house arrest at the time and I couldn't leave the studio anyway.”

That little bit of studio time paid off a year later when Snoop's *Doggystyle* sold nearly five million copies. After the album broke records and established him as a superstar, Snoop always gave shout outs to Dre for supplying musical vision. It was a surprise, then, when rumors surfaced that Suge was angry because Dre didn't support Snoop at the Long Beach rapper's murder trial in Los Angeles.

Why weren't you there Dre?

“I don't like the fuckin' courtroom,” Dre says with finality. “That's my reason for not going. I don't like going up there and I never did. And I never will. I talked to the lawyers all the time and I knew he was going to get off. And if Snoop wanted to chill, he came by the house and we kicked it. When I was locked down, Snoop didn't come and see me. I didn't take no offense to that shit. I was in jail. He was just in court. He never came down to visit me one time. Did I say anything about that? No. ‘Cause I don't give a fuck. I don't even want you to see me in this fucking cell. Nigga, I will see you when I get home.”

The only Death Row member to publicly discuss Dre's leaving was Tupac. He told two L.A. radio show hosts that Dre not showing at the trial was essentially a Benedict Arnold move. “Dre's doing his own thing,” said Tupac to King Tech and Sway at KKBT's Wakeup Show. “It don't affect us. My take on what happened was that Snoop was on trial for murder, fighting for his life. Somebody said Dre was in his car. The jury believed that. We needed Dre to be there to say he wasn't there. Once they would have saw Dre, they would have known he (Snoop) wasn't in the car. That would have saved Snoop's whole case. Dre never showed up. He was too busy. When they told me that, I was like, no matter how dope he is, and Dre is one of my heroes in the music business, if he's not down for his homeboy Snoop who brought him back when he was a relic, then I don't want to be around him. Plus I feel as though what's done in the dark will come to light. It's secrets that everybody's gonna find out about that I don't have to player hate or snitch about.”

Dre responded to Tupac's charge of abandoning ship by questioning Tupac's ability to speak for the label he just joined. “How is it Tupac gonna say something about when it was time to get on the ship?” Dre asked out loud. “For one, I ain't got nothing bad to say about Tupac. But from what I heard, Tupac was like, ‘fuck Dre.’ They had some type of Death Row party and he was all, ‘fuck Dre.’ Fuck that. I ain't did nothing but help Tupac. I didn't have to give up that song (“California Love”). And what he talking about Dre jumped ship? Dre built the ship that he's on right now. All that is bullshit.”

He also agreed with the way the Notorious B.I.G. has avoided speaking in public about his beef with Tupac. “To me, if somebody has a problem with me and he's all out in the open talking about it, then what he wants me to do is respond,” Dre says. “I'm not going to satisfy him. Yeah, I think Biggie is doing the right thing by not responding to shit. He's kicking it. Why should he respond? He's chilling and making money. Nobody knows what the fuck he's doing. If he ain't happy with his wife, he has girls around that's just doing what the fuck he wants them to do. He's happy as fuck sitting in the Jacuzzi reading what so and so said about him and chilling. The same thing with me. I'll be sitting in the Jacuzzi with a bottle of Cristal laughing at motherfuckers that's out there talking about me.”

Dre's departure does not leave Death Row Records without talented producers or an all-star cast of rappers and singers. Since he slipped in the back door with his cousin Snoop, Daz has been fine-tuning his skills as a producer while Kurupt continues his lyrical gangbanging. And Hammer, The Lady of Rage, Jewell and Danny Boy are sure shot best sellers for the label.

The label's main breadwinner, Snoop Doggy Dogg, isn't going anywhere either. With his new record label, Doggystyle Records, Snoop will likely stay with Knight, who is also busy setting up Death Row East with Eric B. And with the guaranteed platinum of rap's most volatile figure, Tupac Shakur, Suge won't have to sell any of his 34 cars for cash any time soon.

EAST COAST KILLA/WEST COAST KILLA

“All this East coast/West coast shit has gotta be the most stupid shit I ever heard in life,” Dre says. “I'ma tell you what it is. It's a concept. It's another way for motherfuckers that don't have the skills they need to keep up with the times to sell records. So if you get on a record and you talking this East coast/West coast shit it means you just trying to jump aboard this concept. See what I mean? It's shit that the public wants to hear right now. A lot of people just jump on that.”

To deal with the situation exacerbated by the supposed “beef” between his old label and Puffy's Bad Boy Records, Dre is producing a cut called “East Coast Killa/West Coast Killa.” “The song means if you talking this East coast/West coast shit, kill that noise,” Dre explains.

One half of the video for “East Coast Killa/West Coast Killa,” to be directed by *Friday* director F. Gary Gray, will be set in Los Angeles with Nas and KRS-One, while the other half will be shot in New York with RBX and King Tee grabbing the mic. The song's opening line, where RBX says, “While childish MC's battle over coastal fronts. . .,” should set the stage for an important hip-hop summer.

It also looks like Dre will be working with Nas, Foxxy Brown and AZ on a group called The Firm, which will likely be released on Dre's label. Capone, Noriega, Lord Shariff and a few West coast rappers will star on another album that Dre maintains will “be a unity type of thang that will be another *Chronic.*”

He admits that his boy Ice Cube, who has been at the heart of both the division and healing of the East/West drama, was a little upset by the notion of Dre making a bi-coastal B-boy collective. “That's his thing,” Dre says. “Cube is my boy. We go back. That's my nigga forever. Business is business. When it's time to hook up, we do it. He can say whatever the fuck he wants to say. I have no problem with him feeling the way he does about the East coast. Do your thing, man. I got a different way of thinking about it. There is too much separation already. Why do we need to add more?”

Steve Stoute, who manages Nas, feels Dre leaving Death Row is a sad ending for a strong Black record label. Still though, Stoute said it was a smart move. “Everybody believes Dre is the best producer in music,” Stoute said in an interview. “Forget all the drama. Since the breakup I think Dre has just been focused on making music. True music people just want to make music.”

AN NWA REUNION, DOC, ROCK 'N ROLL AND THE FUTURE

Though getting his label off and running is more important right now than a reunion album, Dre said he is still excited about the prospect of working with Cube, Yella and Ren. “Everybody's talking about it,” he said. “Just

DRE DAY:
THE DR. SPEAKS HIS MIND

ON RAP BEING UNDER ATTACK BY POLITICIANS

“If I'm on the outside looking in and I don't like hip-hop, why do I need to fuck with you and try to stop it when you're fucking it up yourself? I can just sit back and watch. And wait for *you* to kill it. Same thing as gang banging—people sit back and watch niggas kill each other. People that don't like niggas can just sit back, without lifting a fucking finger, and the shit that they want to happen is getting done. Niggas is killing each other while they sit back and watch. The same thing goes for hip-hop. These Bob Dole and Delores Tucker motherfuckers, they can watch as it kills itself. East coast versus West coast is the best thing that could have happened for them.”

THE FUTURE OF HIP-HOP

“People ask me in interviews where I think hip-hop is going. There's no answer for that because I'm not a psychic. I'm not down with Dionne Warwick and shit. I don't have no psychic friends. I think that gangsta rap is dead. Totally fucking dead. You can't say bitch, hoe on a record no more and sell a million. It's done. Niggas got to come with some skills now. Whether it be on the tracks or in your rhymes, you gotta come with some shit. Period. Can't come with no ABC ass rhymes and sell no records.”

“CALIFORNIA LOVE”

“I never hung out with Tupac or nothing. For that one song I decided I was going to start on my next album and I did “California Love.” It was just me on the song originally. I wanted the song to come out right then but I didn't have a record out. So me and Suge got together and was like, ‘Yo, let's put this on Tupac's album since it's about to come out now.’ So what I did was take out my second verse and put in Tupac's verse and let him do some adlibs at the end. Then bam, we do the video. That's how that happened.”

WHY HE NEVER STRAYED FROM PRODUCING HIS OWN CIRCLE

“I ain't no industry ho. That's what I call ‘em. Motherfuckers that produce for a million people. What do hoes do? They get paid for sex, right? You can't just pay me some money for a track. I ain't no industry ho. If I'm digging you and we kick-

Continued on page 78

gotta see what happens. I'm totally into that shit. The ultimate goal is to do an N.W.A movie about the life of N.W.A, and do a soundtrack for that. There's a bunch of shit people ain't even knowing about."

But despite making amends with his N.W.A chums and RBX, don't look for Dre to bring back another one of his former running buddies. "Man, fuck The DOC," Dre says loudly. "Print it. DOC ain't shit. But he's my nigga. Let me explain that shit to you. As far as business goes, fuck DOC. That motherfucker did some ol' shiesty shit, trying to forge my name on some shit. Stole my title, 'Helter Skelter,' which is a title that I came up with for me and Cube's album. He was always talking about the title. Next thing I know that's what his album is called. So fuck DOC. Plus he's trying to sue me about some other shit. Me and DOC will never do another fucking business deal ever again in life. He has a massive ego. What he should have did instead of trying to rap himself was just face the facts. My [DOC's] shit don't sound right. He just shoulda' took the money that he got to do his record and started some kind of label or production company. And his album—that shit ain't gonna go copper."

Loud Records founder Steve Rifkind, who took Wu-Tang's muffled grime and made it mainstream, thinks Dre can move hip-hop into new directions by finally being free to fuse different genres of music with hip-hop. "Even before all this East coast/West coast hype, Dre had major love on the East coast," Rifkind said from New York. "I think his working with Nas is going to be incredible. And there are possibilities that he could do for rock what Rick Rubin did with Run-DMC and Aerosmith."

This has been on Dre's mind as well. "I wanna do some Black rock 'n roll. That's what I really want to try. I like doing some different shit. There's some rock 'n roll motherfuckers that are Black and haven't had a chance to put their shit out. . . They'll say there's no market for Black rock 'n roll, but I don't believe that. I wanna try something in the future called Ghetto Metal. That's what the sound is gone be called. It's gonna have my type of track with guitars and creative ass melodies. But it's not going to be like no typical rock 'n roll. It's gonna be some shit that my audience is going to like."

There's no telling if rock aficionados will soon see Dre djing for Lenny Kravitz. That's unpredictable like L.A. weather. And with the short, but storied history of Death Row Records, we can all probably also agree that this won't be the last roster change there either. But for now, Dre's escape from Death Row has him feeling optimistic about the future. So while the world chatters their gums about what he's doing, Dr. Dre just continues to hum himself to sleep with theme music for his new afterlife.

"You go through the worst time of your life before you get to the best," Dre said, staring out at the ocean again, ". . .and I been there."

From this point on Dr. Dre is on cool out mode. "Sit with my girl, smoke some shit and make some bomb ass music. This is my life right here. Chilling on the beach, eating and doing interviews. Just kicking it." Ⓢ

Continued from page 77

ing it, then we can do some business. Other than that, I can't fuck with you. Money ain't got nothing to do with it. Longevity is what I'm about."

LAURYN HILL OF THE FUGEES

"She's so fucking dope to me, man. For a while I was trying to get at her. This was before her record came out. Now they got their thing going with the new album. So I stopped pursuing it. And I ain't trying to get in the way of nobody doing their thing. I just thought she was dope and was one of the people I would like to work with. She's the shit. Their album is dope. I love that album."

HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MICHEL'LE

"I haven't talked to Michel'le in a while. As far as she goes I have a different kind of love for her. She's like my sister. We don't get along. She's doing her thing and I am doing mine. We only gotta communicate about our son."

THE EAST COAST

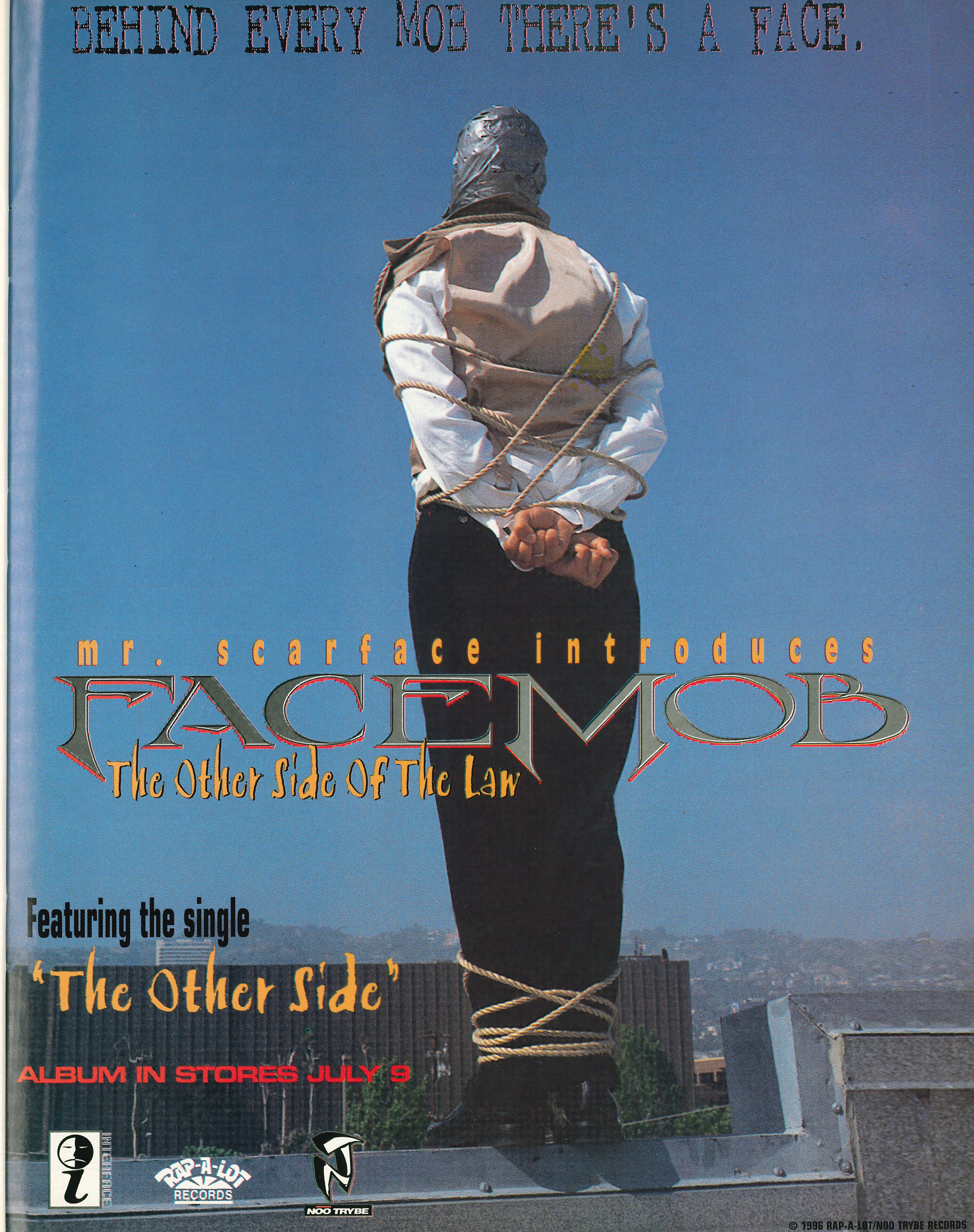
"I have never said fuck the East coast. I'ma represent where I'm from to the fullest. Because I love California. This is where I'm from and where I wanna die. I love L.A. I been all over the world and I don't think there's another place like L.A. As far as the East coast goes, I love them niggas. I think there are more hits coming out the East coast today then outta the West coast. It's a fact. Look at it. I don't give a fuck if you from Afghanistan or some shit like that. If a motherfucker put out some dope shit that I'm digging, I'm going to buy it. Period. I ain't got no beef."

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SONG

"My formula is this: what I think is a good song is something that keeps your attention for the first 15 seconds. Because I was a DJ back in the day and that's all I gave a song. I used to go to the record pool and listen to hundreds of records a day. So when you put that record on, you give that motherfucker 15 seconds. If it don't grab you, then toss it. That's how the listener is."

HIS PHILOSOPHY ABOUT MAKING MUSIC

"What I try to do is make records that's better than anything that's out. Then people follow me. So I'm gonna set the trend. I just get these ideas. Shit just pops in my head. I could be sleep and wake up with an idea. Sometimes it just pops up or I hear something that sparks an idea. This is what separates me from everybody else: the sounds I hear in my head, I can get that on tape. You know the people that's doing wack cuts don't want the shit to be wack. They just don't have the ability to get their idea on tape. They can't get the sounds they want on tape. They settle for what they can get. I get in the studio and shit just comes. I got a gift." Ⓢ



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THE NATURAL

Straight outta Louisiana, twenty-year-old Chanda Rubin may be the most famous hip-hop head on the women's tennis circuit

BY J.A. ADANDE

The thing about the women's tennis tour is that the more the players travel the world and the better they get, the less they get to see. Winning matches means staying later in the week, then leaving just in time to get to the next tournament. No trips to the Louvre museum during the French Open, no excursions to the Tower of London at Wimbledon.

That's the life of Chanda Rubin, one of the rising stars on the WTA Tour. It's gotten to the point where when she wants to get away from it all, she heads back to Lafayette, Louisiana. And when she wants to relax on the road, she sets up her CD player and speakers in her hotel room. That way, she says, "I can listen to whatever I want regardless of where I am."

"I like a lot of different things," Rubin says of her musical tastes. "I'm into Snoop and Tupac and Biggie Smalls—a lot of stuff like that."

You won't find many other players on the tour carrying those CDs around, mainly because Chanda is one of the few Black players, part of a small group that includes Zina Garrison-Jackson, Katrina Adams and young Venus Williams.

"It doesn't get lonely in the sense that there aren't many Black players," Rubin, 20, says. "That doesn't play a big part in it. I try to make sure I get some breaks and just get home and relax a little bit. Usually, that takes care of things." At home, she's just Chanda. She can pursue her latest hobby, horseback riding, and simply be herself. Out on the tour, there's the pressure to perform both on and off the court.

"Anybody who's in the public eye and high-profile is a role model, regardless of whether they think of it or not," Rubin says. "I don't think of myself saying, 'OK, I'm a role model.' But I'm sure there are kids out there who maybe have seen me play, who enjoy watching me play, who think, 'Oh, I want to be like her one day,' or 'I want to play at the level where she's playing,' and I think it's great. Hopefully, every kid will see something positive in what I'm doing. But it doesn't really change the way that I go out and work and what I try to do as I focus. I'm still going to go out and work as hard as I can and be myself. That's really all I can do."

With a glowing smile and pleasant demeanor, she's easy to like. She doesn't giggle after every sentence as Monica Seles does, but she'll pause to laugh several times during a conversation. Rubin seems well-equipped to handle all of the pitfalls that go along with fame. Her father, Edward, is a judge and her mother, Bernadette, is a retired schoolteacher, and while Chanda was coming up, they ran a disciplined house. But they were also the ones who fostered her interest in tennis.

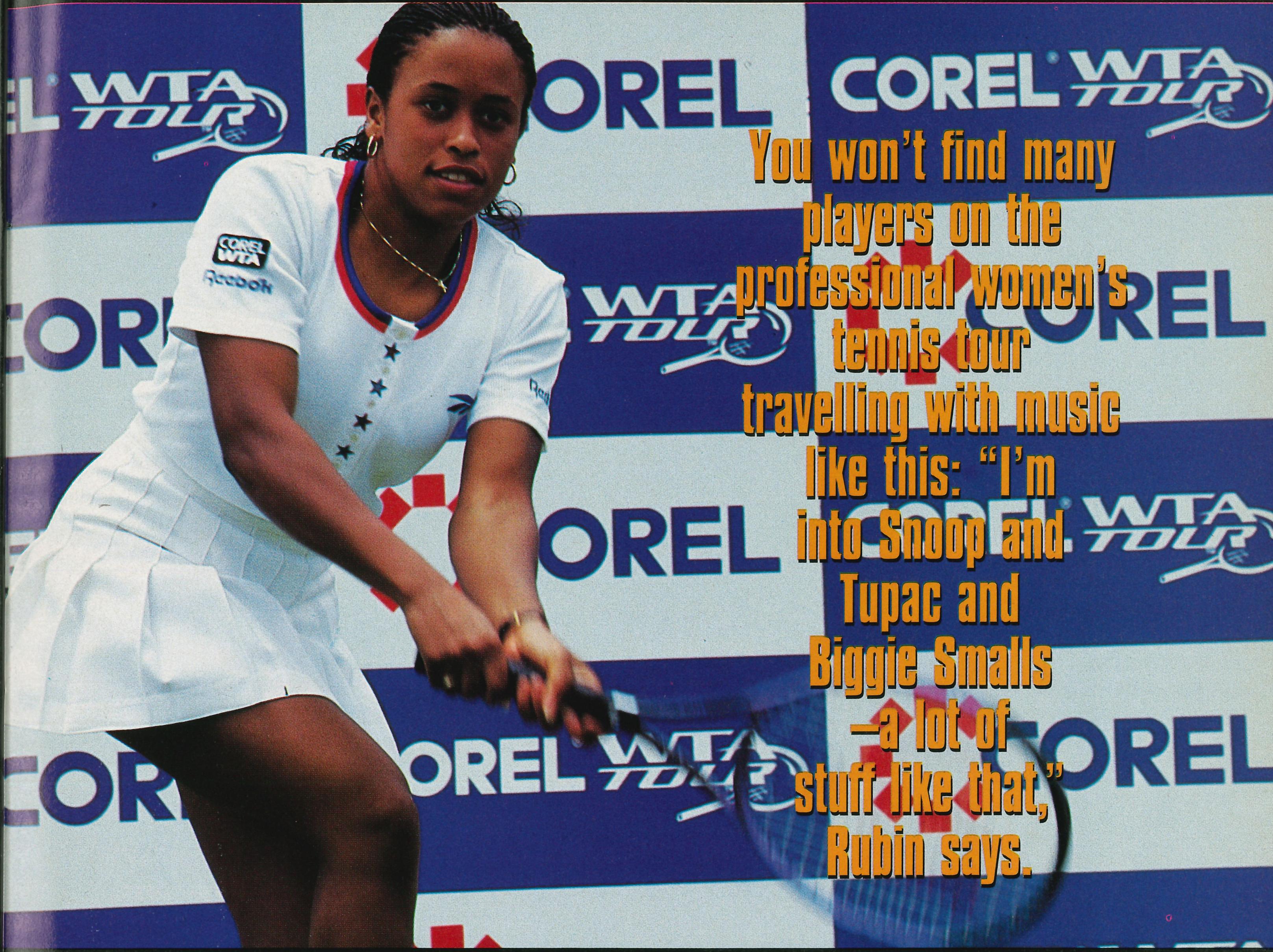
It began when she was a little girl and would follow them onto the court when they played. "It kind of went from there," Rubin says. "They started hitting with me for five or ten minutes. When they saw I could really hit the ball, they signed me up for lessons. "When I was 13 or 14, I was thinking along the lines of turning pro and trying to stay on the tour. I realized I could compete with a lot of the girls. It's just kind of a natural progression."

COREL WTA TOUR

Unlike most of the stars on the tour, Chanda finished high school before she began jetting all around the country and the world as a professional. Her parents weren't about to make the same mistakes so many other overzealous tennis parents make by sending their kids out into the world too soon.

"They, of course, stressed education and promoted that," Rubin says. "I was never tempted to drop out, I always wanted to do well at whatever I was doing. I wanted to be a good student and practice hard and be a good player. Sometimes it was tough doing well at both, but that was always my goal, and that was the only thought that I had in mind, not ever quitting."

Rubin turned pro in 1991 and won the Wimbledon junior singles title the next year, but her big breakthrough came in 1995. She got a new coach, former men's player Marcel Freeman, and a new harder-working attitude. It resulted in a year that earned her the WTA Most Improved Player award in addition to being recognized as the US Tennis Association Female Athlete of the Year.



You won't find many players on the professional women's tennis tour travelling with music like this: "I'm into Snoop and Tupac and Biggie Smalls —a lot of stuff like that," Rubin says.

MCELLIGOT PHOTOGRAPHY LTD.

Chanda won the Futures/Midland tournament and reached the finals of the Eastbourne and Los Angeles tournaments. She came back from the brink of defeat—down one set and trailing love-40 in the second set—to beat Jana Novotna in the third round of the French Open and eventually made it to the quarterfinals. Chanda put her name in the Wimbledon record books when she outlasted Patricia Hy-Boulais, 7-6, 6-7, 17-15, in the most games ever played in a women's game there. At all of the Grand Slams except the US Open, there are no tie-breakers, so if the match is tied after three sets, they keep playing until someone wins by two games. Rubin was on the court for 3 hours and 45 minutes that day; the final set alone took 2 hours and 4 minutes.

At this year's Australian Open she was at it again, hooking up with Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario for a match that lasted 3 hours and 33 minutes before Rubin won 6-4, 2-6, 16-14. Rubin made it to the semifinals there and had a 5-2 lead over Monica Seles in the final set before the rough and tough Seles came back to win.

She believes that these marathon matches don't come from any type of special preparation (her training regimen consists of twice-a-day court sessions lasting 90 minutes or more, running 3 or 4 miles three or four times a week, and an hour in the gym five times a week), but instead from a will to win. As she said after the Wimbledon epic, "I wanted to keep fighting and I knew I wanted to win the match, but I didn't know why. Toward the end of the third, I was just like, 'Come on, just one more game.' It was very frustrating, but I just kept thinking, 'Keep fighting, somebody has to win, and hopefully it will be you.'"

Rubin has continued to progress this year, breaking into the Top 10 on the tour's computer rankings and surpassing the $1 million mark in career earnings. But in women's tennis, the gap between the best—Seles and Steffi Graf—and even their closest competitors is huge, and bridging that last distance can be nearly impossible. Rubin learned that first hand when Seles came back to beat her in Australia, and she has suffered four defeats at the hands of Graf.

She already seems to have mastered life on the tour. "You have a lot of demands on your time," she says. "That's certainly a part that comes with it. You just have to take the good with the bad. The good definitely outweighs the bad." Ⓢ

Seams Unfair

The Cleveland Indians' Albert Belle is probably the angriest man in baseball. He hits the ball with aggression, plays the field with a scowl on his grill and reporters better stay out of his way.

JOE GIBLIN

A Black man was robbed and nobody said a damn thing. In the large scheme of things, it really didn't make a difference. Life as most AmeriKKKans know it, as it always does, will go on. Just ask the American Indians.

Cal Ripken and Greg Maddux ran shit in baseball last season. Mo Vaughn got the American League MVP. Albert Belle got lynched. After having one of the greatest slugging seasons in the history of the game, Belle got nada, nothing, zero. He blew up the spot by blowing up. More than his .317 batting average, 50 home runs, 126 RBI's and .690 slugging percentage, in a shortened season, Albert Belle got run in the newspapers for not being "user friendly." He refused to talk, refused to be nice, refused to make life easy for the invasion of privacy medium that makes Black athletes out to be spoiled, angry men instead of gifted, private citizens.

> Albert Belle got lynched. After having one of the greatest slugging seasons in the history of the game (.317 batting average, 50 home runs, 126 RBI's and .690 slugging percentage, in a shortened season), Belle got nada, nothing, zero.

Sweat the technique, just don't sweat him. Albert Belle has never liked media attention, good or bad. He's the kind of athlete that would rather have his game do the talking. Throughout his career he's made that clear by simply asking to be left alone. He just wants to play ball.

Can you do this interview right quick?

No haps.

The microphone fiends still swarm him, looking for that rare quote, that off-the-record statement so he can snap and have the headlines read: Belle Loses It Again!

Seems unfair. Steve Carlton went his entire career pitching for Philly and never talked to the media. His wishes respected, he went to the Hall of Fame. Tim Belcher goes off on a television crew, and nobody says a word. And you ask, why is this Black man angry?

Jim Everett takes out a reporter on ESPN, and he becomes a hero. Albert Belle screams at a group of media vultures and gets sued. And you ask why is this Black man angry?

He strokes the ball out of the park as good as Frank Thomas, Griff Jr., Cecil Fielder, Matt Williams, Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire and Dante Bichette, but he's the one who gets accused of rolling with a corked bat. And you ask why is this Black man angry?

He is accused of throwing a baseball at a Sports Illustrated photographer. The photographer hasn't pressed charges, but Belle still faces possible action from the league. And you ask, why is this Black man angry?

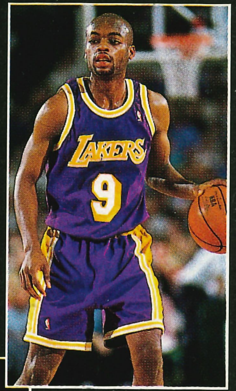
He didn't get the MVP last year because they said he didn't cooperate with the media. But the boys on his squad love him. And you ask. . .

"What do you think this is, a barbeque?" That's what Albert screamed at a bunch of reporters crammed around his locker one day. They fail to understand that the brother just wants to be left alone to do his thing and go home in peace. As baseball continues to be America's game, the media continues to rob a brother of his right to privacy. Just like America robbed the Indians of this land. Now what's the name of the team Belle plays for? Seems unfair, doesn't it? ⓢ

BY GOLDIE

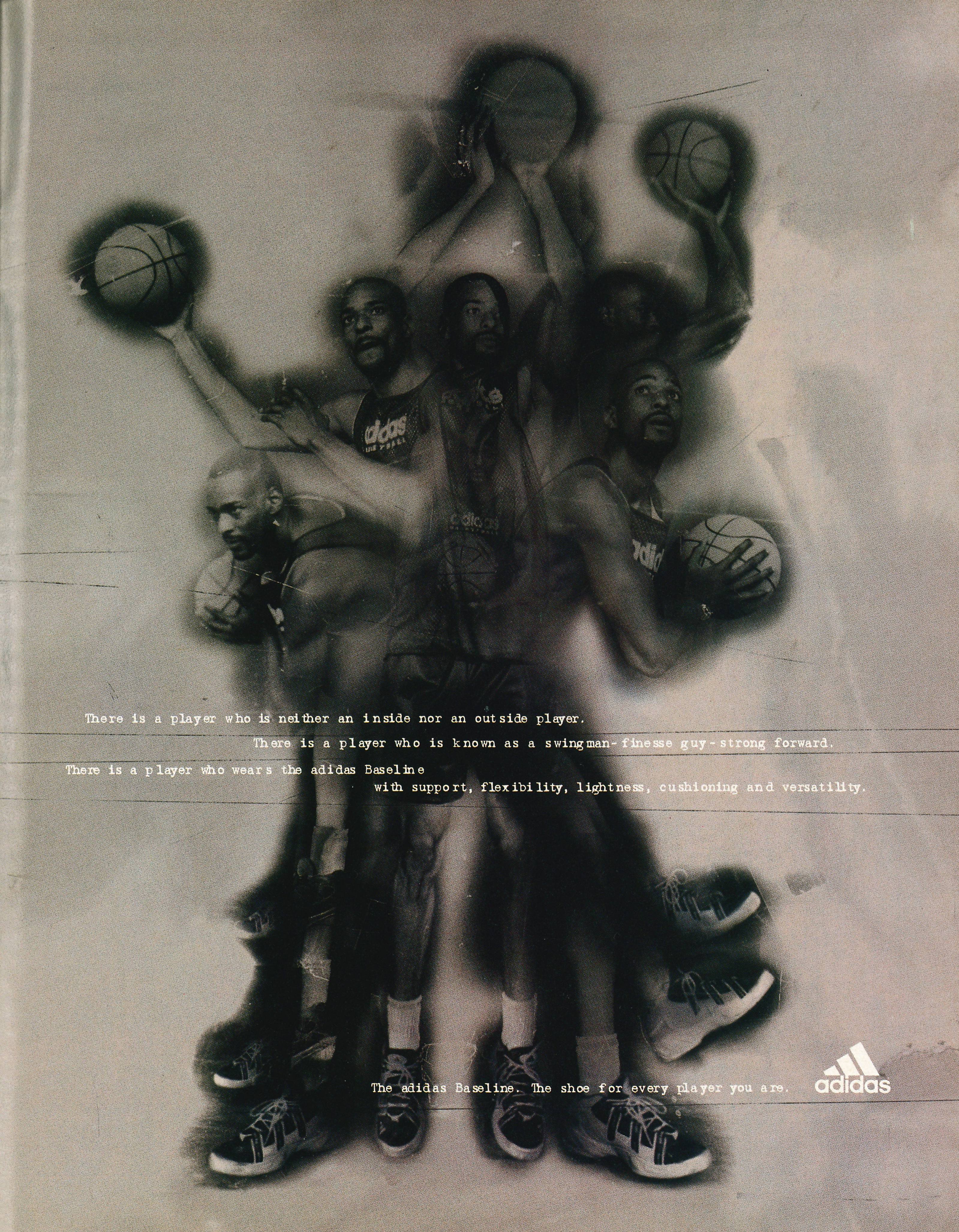
THE RAP ON SPORTS

The NBA referee situation is officially off the hook. Every time a player blows up at a ref, his name and reputation are dragged through the mud. Of course these guys shouldn't be saying jack to the refs, you learn that in junior high. But somebody forgot to tell the refs not to say jack to the players. What happens is a guy will be mad about a call, say one thing that may be within the boundaries of not getting a technical, but then the ref blows up on him. Like when referee Ron Garretson hit **Nick Van Exel** with a tech, then called him a "smart-ass." That sounds personal to me. Anyway, no one ever said anything about RWA (refs with attitude) until one of the league's ambassadors, **Magic Johnson**, was tossed for bumping an official. Without saying anyone was right or wrong in that incident, or that one person initiated the contact, a little bump like that is some bullshit and there's no way anyone should be ejected for what happened in the Magic incident. . . • Now that that's out of the way, did you see how *Sports Illustrated* tried to play Nick Van Exel in their April 29th issue? Because of his run-in with a ref, they dug up some incident when he was in Trinity Valley Community College, where he was fighting with a teammate who he apparently kicked while he was already on the ground unconscious. "When you're fighting, it's not like I'm going to feel sorry for you," he told the magazine. "When you're fighting, you're fighting." Then they tried to get him like OJ and quoted someone saying that he used to slap his girlfriend around. The ex-girlfriend, who is white, denies it. Hmmmm. . . •Remember the baseball umpire that collapsed and died on opening day in Cincinnati this year? Well, Cincinnati Reds owner **Marge Schott** reportedly sent a basket of recycled flowers to the umpires' dressing room following the death of John McSherry. Schott wrote a sympathy note and attached it to flowers given to her by the Reds' television affiliate. Schott was quoted as saying she was upset that the game had to be postponed. The flowers were sent to the umpires room the following day. A previous report claimed Schott gave her employees recycled boxes of candy as Christmas presents. . . •University of Nebraska



FOCUS ON SPORTS

FOCUS ON SPORTS


There is a player who is neither an inside nor an outside player.
There is a player who is known as a swingman-finesse guy-strong forward.
There is a player who wears the adidas Baseline with support, flexibility, lightness, cushioning and versatility.
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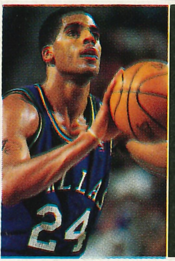
running back **Lawrence Phillips** was the big story in the NFL draft. The talk was that nobody wanted to touch him because of his past run-ins with the law. He is on probation for dragging his girlfriend down a flight of steps. That didn't stop him from going sixth overall. In case you missed them, here are the rest of the first round picks: 1. New York Jets—Keyshawn Johnson, WR, Southern Cal; 2. Jacksonville Jaguars—Kevin Hardy, LB, Illinois; 3. Arizona Cardinals—Simeon Rice, DE, Illinois; 4. Baltimore—Jonathan Ogden, OT, UCLA; 5. New York Giants—Cedric Jones, DE, Oklahoma; 6. St. Louis Rams (from Washington)—Lawrence Phillips, RB, Nebraska; 7. New England Patriots—Terry Glenn, WR, Ohio State; 8. Carolina Panthers—Tim Biakabatuka, RB, Michigan; 9. Oakland Raiders (from Houston)—Rickey Dudley, TE, Ohio State; 10. Cincinnati Bengals—Willie Anderson, OT, Auburn; 11. New Orleans Saints—Alex Molden, DB, Oregon; 12. Tampa Bay Buccaneers—Regan Upshaw, DE, California; 13. Chicago Bears (from St. Louis)—Walt Harris, DB, Mississippi State; 14. Houston Oilers (from Seattle)—Eddie George, RB, Ohio State; 15. Denver Broncos—John Mobley, LB, Kutztown State; 16. Minnesota Vikings—Duane Clemons, LB, California; 17. Detroit Lions (from Oakland via Houston and Seattle)—Reggie Brown, LB, Texas A&M; 18. St. Louis Rams (from Chicago)—Eddie Kennison, WR, Louisiana State; 19. Indianapolis (from Atlanta)—Marvin Harrison, WR, Syracuse; 20. Miami Dolphins—Daryl Gardener, DT, Baylor; 21. Seattle Seahawks (from San Diego via Detroit)—Pete Kendall, G, Boston College; 22. Tampa Bay (from Indianapolis)—Marcus Jones, DE, North Carolina; 23. Detroit Lions—Jeff Hartings, G, Penn State; 24. Buffalo Bills—Eric Moulds, WR, Mississippi State; 25. Philadelphia Eagles—Jermane Mayberry, OT, Texas A&M-Kingsville; 26. Baltimore (from San Francisco)—Ray Lewis, LB, Miami; 27. Green Bay Packers—John Michels, OT, Southern Cal; 28. Kansas City Chiefs—Jerome Woods, S, Memphis; 29. Pittsburgh Steelers—Jamain Stephens, OT, North Carolina A&T; 30. Washington Redskins (from Dallas)—Andre Johnson, OT, Penn State. S

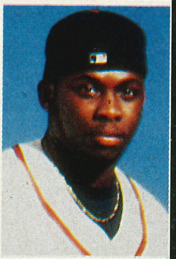
FOCUS ON SPORTS

TIME OUT



JIM JACKSON & PHIFE

Jim Jackson, the should-be-an-All-Star two guard from the Dallas Mavericks, kicks it with Phife Di-dog, who would leave A Tribe Called Quest only if he could get the vacant New York Knicks head coaching position.


BARRY GOSSAGE

Phife Dog: The Mavs last year were putting up threes in record numbers. . .

Jim Jackson: Our big men got hurt. So, in order for us to go out there and compete, we had to make other teams match up, instead of us matching up with them. So, we went with a smaller line-up. We were shooting almost as well from three as we were from two, so we decided to use that as a weapon. And that works when we're doing well and making our shots.

P: What music are you listening to? Who do you support?

J: Well, I support everybody that's in the game. As far as what I'm listening to, I listen to a lot of East Coast. Tribe Called Quest, of course. . .

P: Good lookin', good lookin'. . .

J: Biggie and Method and Redman. I also listen to West Coast, Snoop and Dre, Tupac. So I listen to a variety, but those right there are what I mainly listen to, especially game day. And we travel a lot so I always got my Discman.

P: Who would you like to get in the draft this year?

J: I'd like Marcus Camby or Tim Duncan. More Tim Duncan, because we need that seven-footer on the inside. But if not, we could get a Marcus Camby also, at 6' 10", 'cause teams are playing us and not respecting our inside game. We don't have a post up center.

P: Right, and Jason [Kidd] would have another option.

J: No doubt.

P: It would have been nice if y'all could've got Rasheed Wallace last year.

J: Yeah, but Rasheed went earlier, he went three or four and we had the tenth pick. But we would love to have somebody like that on the inside, especially in the West Coast. A guy that's athletic, can run and shoot the ten foot jump shot'll love our system, especially a center.

P: What's the deal with you and Jamal Mashburn? There was talk about y'all having some kind of beef.

J: That thing got totally blown out of proportion. I think Coach had more to do with that than anybody 'cause he's the one that put that in the newspapers. Me and Mash just looked at it where we were in a no-win situation. As players, things weren't going right anyway, so they gonna look at any little thing and try to blow it up. We just looked at that situation and kinda laughed at it. 'Cause if any of that stuff was true where we didn't talk or pass the ball to each other, then they were watching another game or something.

P: But what happened? Y'all had a argument in practice or something?

J: Nah, we never had nothing like that. I don't know what happened. Coach just said something in the paper one day and it took off from there. It wasn't like me and Mash had words or we said anything, or we went to other people and said something.

P: Jamal is my man coming from Uptown. I always supported him back at Cardinal Hayes and then at Kentucky. So, I figured with y'all two on the same squad and then y'all picked up Jason, it's all good.

J: Oh, no doubt.

P: Yo, I don't like the Cowboys, I support the Mavericks strictly. I think the Cowboys cheated in the Superbowl as a matter of fact. I think they slipped Neil O'Donnell some money under the table or something.

J: I'm a Steeler fan too, and that hurt my heart. O'Donnell did that shit twice. Not once, but twice.

P: You're from Ohio, you're not a Cleveland Browns fan?

J: Nah, I always been a Steelers fan, since '74.

P: Who's the toughest defender you've had to face at your position?

J: Well, last year when we played Chicago, Mike [Jordan] was playing the point, so I didn't have to face him for the whole game. But Mitch Richmond is probably the toughest at the two guard.

P: Who talks the most trash in the league?

J: Well, Gary Payton keeps comin' at you. But he's not trash-talking to put you down. He does it more to motivate himself and his teammates. Most of the time when we play them he really don't go off like that, but him and Jason go at it because they boys.

P: Who do you like out of the rookies?

J: Damon Stoudamire. They building something up there and it's all around Damon. He can shoot, penetrate, he can finish and he can dish off. You can't lay back and you can't get up real tight, so what you gonna do?

P: So I'm sayin', now that we boys, you think I can get a little jersey or somethin', somethin'? S

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SUE KWON

DE LA SOUL

Stakes Is High

Tommy Boy

Production: artist, Spearhead X, Jay Dee, Skeff Anslem, OG

🎤🎤🎤🎤 **Let this be known:** by their mere presence on the plenary scene of hip-hop consumable, the Plugs Three condemn the rudimentary to elongated shelf life. When their elocution elevates the lexicon of the rap game to the much aspired "next level," the wise swim in the newly treaded lyrical waters and the foolhardy stand satisfied with Hooked-On-Phonics recitals. But now, after all the logic and the theorem, Posdnuos—the president of a paragraph who takes pleasure in difficult preaching—wants the ignorant niggas to hear him: "Man, every word I say should be a hip-hop quotable," he asserts on "Stakes Is High." Broken down to its very last compound, this all means a change in speak for De La Soul on their fourth full-length recording for living in a full-time era, *Stakes Is High*.

Arriving from the relatively placid lands of Strong Island in 1989 with the landmark *3 Feet High and Rising*, Posdnuos, Trugoy the Dove and P.A. Mase (with a notable assist from Prince Paul) stretched the attention span of the hip-hop audience from metaphor to allegory, paving the way for Tongues of Native origin. Seven years later, the peas porridge which kept the trip docile has been scraped from the bottom of the pot and it's time for heads to get flown. Unlike trend chameleons whose personalities flow to the ebbs of ringing cash registers, da Soul spits into the winds of the reigning orthodoxy, targeting gangsta poseurs and microwave Mafioso. "See them Cubans don't care what y'all niggas do/ Colombians ain't never ran with your crew/ Why you actin' all spicy and shiesty?/ The only Italians you knew was iceys," sets Dove on "It's So Easy."

But *Stakes* is more remedy than enema; the Plugs lead by example. The onomatopoetically titled "Dininit," the hometown clarion "Island Degrees," "Poni Ride"—an introspective talk in three parts—"Sunshine," and the aforementioned "It's So Easy," follow in the evolution of the De La sound, showcasing fleeting wordplay and self-performed harmonies over layers of melodic blends, spliced sounds and electronically manipulated tones. UTD's Most Def and Chi's finest, Common, check in for bouncy mic-toss sessions on "Big Brother Beat" and "The Bizness," respectively; and R&B croonstresses Zhane add to the doo-hop bounce of "4 More," while the Jazzy Fat Nastees blow over a puffy ditty of satire entitled, "Baby, Baby, Oohh Baby."

True enough, the stakes are high. But, having been dealt in wonce again, De La Soul have upped the ante more than a pretty penny. Gelatin spined players at the table are bound to fold.

christian ex

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JIM BINDER

HELTAH SKELTAH

Nocturnal

Duck Down/Priority

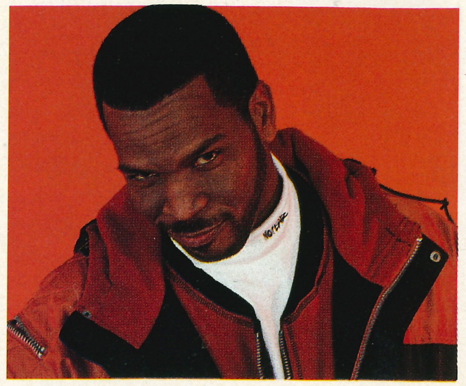
Production: Baby Paul, Mr. Walt, Evil D, Buckshot, Lord Jamar, E-Swift, Shaleek

This seems to be the master plan for hip-hop domination: first, set things off with an undeniable masterpiece, such as Black Moon's debut *Enta Da Stage*. Next, put on other members of your crew, who proceed to amaze and astound in their own right—see Smif-n-Wessun's *Da Shinin*. And then, just when headz are salivating for any piece of work bearing your imprimatur, start your own label and sew things up with more dope product. This is how far Brooklyn's Boot Camp Clik has come in just three short years. The next group up to represent Bucktown is Heltah Skeltah, whose debut, *Nocturnal*—on Buckshot's own Duck Down Entaprizez—may just vault the Clik into the same category as the other East Coast super crews.

Heltah Skeltah is made up of the high-powered MCs Ruc and Roc, who were introduced as two-thirds of the Fab 5 cipher on "Leflah Leflaur Eshkoshka." Make no mistake: these two rip the mic like a two-headed monster, with Ruc's deep-voiced flow perfectly situated as the backbone to Roc's hard-as-nails delivery. *Nocturnal's* cuts fall into three categories of lyrical technique. "Soldiers Gone Psycho" and "Letha Brainz Blo" are strictly hardcore jams courtesy of Baby Paul that feature battle rhymes which underscore the Clik's warrior message. The group's incredible mic chemistry is flaunted on "Place to Be" and "The Square," which features the Representativz and aptly compares the center of a Heltah Skeltah cipher to the eye of a hurricane. Ruc and Roc also come with jams that detail and analyze the stress of ghetto livin', such as "Undastand" and the very deep "Therapy."

The production is also solid, designed to highlight rather than overshadow the MCs. Most of the work is handled by Beatminerz Baby Paul, Mr. Walt and Evil D, who create multi-layered soundscapes using ambient samples to prop up the simple drum-propelled tracks. But the centerpiece of this LP still remains the endless stream of tight verses kicked by Ruc and Roc. So far no member of the Boot Camp Clik has slipped up; *Nocturnal* continues this tradition of dopeness.

NICHOLAS POLUHOFF



CHI MODU

UNCLE LUKE

Uncle Luke

Luther Cambell Music Inc.

Production: Luther Campbell Music Inc.

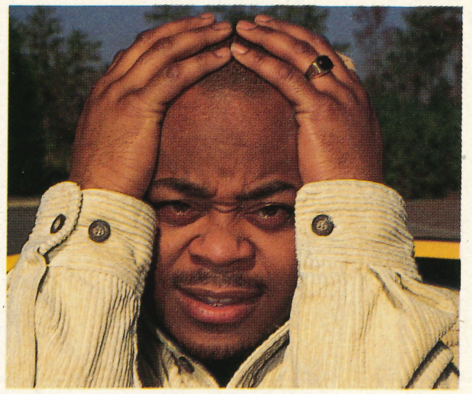
After gaining momentum with his hit single "Scarred," a blazing dance track capitalizing on a sped up Love Unlimited Orchestra loop, Luke is once again ready to release an album full of whatever *he* wants—a benefit of running your own label. There's some good and bad in leaving it all up to Luke, as has been the case with his two previous solo albums.

First, the good. As usual there are a handful of up tempo "bass" or dance tracks that if chosen as singles could be hits in bass markets like the South, Detroit or Baltimore. "Bounce to the Beat," which uses the conga as one of the main drum beats for a change of pace and the latest "Luke Mega Mix" (which continues to milk the "don't stop, get it, get it" chant) are examples.

As far as the bad, it's the same ol' story: too much talking from Luke & his boys. It begins with "Don't Forget Whence You Came," a track doggin' those who haven't appreciated Luke's "graciousness," such as H-Town & his former staff, and it carries on through "Straight Beef"—Luke's discussion about his current beefs—and the concluding "Shout Outs" track. Count the numerous skits and there are nearly 20 minutes of *talking*. The problem is that after one listen you know the joke & it's not funny when you stumble across the track again. They simply clutter the album and dilute the power of the real songs.

If you're patient, there are some hidden jewels. The P-Funkish "Freaky Bitches" is a nice change of pace, and appearances from B.I.G. and Ice Cube add unprecedented clout to a Luke album. Cube's in rare form as he gets "as nasty as he wants to be" over a very simple but tight track topped with a deep grooving bassline. It's pulses like this that outweigh the negatives, but we're still waiting for Luke's non-stop party.

J-MILL



MAURICE MCINNIS

MC BREED

To The Beat Ch'all

WRAP Records

Production: artist, Jazze Pha, Erick Sermon

Flint, Michigan's MC Breed has been a quiet success. Although his biggest splash in the hip-hop pool has come from two singles—"Ain't No Future In Yo Frontin'" and "I Gotta Get Mine," featuring Tupac—Breed is releasing his seventh album in five years. You'd expect national attention for such a remarkable feat, but his loyal fan base isn't sweatin' the details as long as they get what they want; and cater to his fans while stretching the boundaries of his musical and lyrical talents is exactly what Breed delivers on his seventh project, *To The Beat Ch'all*.

Experimenting with a new twist on funk, drum beats, delivery and flow, Breed comes off tight enough to peak the interest of consumers looking for something out of the ordinary. "Cum Clean" is Breed's freestyle execution of all fakers, masqueraders and hip-hop clowns who just can't seem to be real with themselves in life or on the mic. A rather unlikely duo on the marquee actually kick some major flavor when Breed joins with

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Cleveland's "Ooochie Coochie Man" MC Brainz on "Choose One." The ruggedness of the drum laden track and Breed himself are unexpectedly complemented by the newfound rawness of Brainz' flow, which may entice a double take of his album at the record store.

Another gem, "U Can't See Me," has Breed tag teaming with Erick Sermon, who, of late, seems to shine brightly and get EPMDish on collaborations with Western artists. Other notable songs include "Same Thang," "Flossin," and "Cleverness," featuring Jamal, Passin and huck Nyce. For the most part, the album is very solid in its production and lyrics. Each song is an experiment with new music, so there is no sonic redundancy; the vocals are less topic oriented and just flip shit like a barbershop conversation.

This could be the best Breed album in the last three years because it takes chances, sets personal artistic standards and comes off dope. *To The Beat Ch'all* may not grab the spotlight, but it's certainly good for hip-hop music's present state.

ALLEN S. GORDON "THA EBONY CAT"

WESSYDE GOON SQUAD

Around The World

Yab Yum/Epic Records

Production: Lord Sadat, Easy Mo Bee, Rob Bacon, Organized Noise

Hip-hop continues to give heads new twists; particularly when it comes to blending the form's core sound with other genres—R&B, reggae, etc. But such twists often walk a fine line between approval and contempt. So in the face of ongoing conflicts/trepidation about the mass appeal/commercial success quest, LA-based rap/R&B crew Wessyde Goon Squad attempt to defy the odds, dropping their debut album, *Around The World.*

Wessyde comes with a style that's hard to pinpoint. Discovered by Ronnie DeVoe of New Editon/BBD fame—and his uncle, manager Brooke Payne—the group has a noticeably BBD influenced sound. Unfortunately, that sound is dead and extinct like dinosaurs. With the exception of a few cuts, the album is full of glaring inconsistencies: decent tracks with off point lyrical displays or cool vocals mated to mediocre tracks.

One of those exceptions is their first release, "Crazy," which gives listeners an account of life's trials for folks dwelling in the bottom economic rung. Lyrically, they come cool; but the singing takes away from the cut. Another decent cut is "Ghetto Conflict," which uses a sample of Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues" and fuses it with some tight keyboard licks to sprinkle a bit more funk on the track. "Get Together" is another joint on which the group samples yet another Marvin Gaye song—"After The Dance"—but with crafty production the cut is made uptempo and dance-friendly for all the club hoppers.

Some of the album's tracks are decent enough, but they fail to grab and keep your attention. In the end, *Around The World* just doesn't succeed in quenching your hip-hop thirst.

WESLEY MARSHALL

ANTHONY CUTAJAR

WISE INTELLIGENT

Killin' U... For Fun

Contract/Profile

Production: Tony D, 6-19, Abscure Rhythms

The most surprising and disappointing aspect of Wise Intelligent's solo debut is its break with the established Poor Righteous Teachers' methodology. Many of the twelve tracks sound rushed, somewhat sloppy and simply do not give us enough of the unique syncopated, self-styled wisdom we have come to expect from Mr. Wise. Lyrically, his scope has been narrowed and the balance between the material and the metaphysical has become unequal. While maintaining a pro-Black worldview and continuing to manifest his culture (The Nation of 5%), his liberal use of the "n" word and his preoccupation with simplifying his thoughts and delivery are at times as painful to listen to as fingernails on a blackboard.

The album's first cut, "My Sound" (which has received a good deal of college radio airplay in the Northeast), sets the tone with Tony D's production underscoring Wise's casual, sing-song, delivery. "Shitty Inna City" and "I'll Never Kill Again" (w/Foxxy Brown) address the madness of violence in the inner city. On both tracks Wise displays his DJ skills, characteristically slipping in and out of patois and making a strong case for sticking closer to this proven style. It isn't until the fourth track, "Freestyle (A Conscious Lyric)," that Wise seems to return to previous (righteous) form, commenting on the death of Lawrence Meyers, swine, the condition of ex-slaves and the "mistreatin' (of) the herb that's burned for spiritual reasons." The production, by 6-19, is one of the album's best and fits his style better than many of the slower, radio-friendly tracks.

Overall, *Killin' U...For Fun* lacks the coherence and conceptual depth of *Holy Intellect, Pure Poverty* and *Black Business.* The album cover photo—an infamous picture of a lynch mob surrounding a burning Black man—and several interludes are examples of this; their inclusion remains unclear and unexplained. Despite a few glimpses of the vintage Wise Intelligent, this album is a disappointment, mainly because the product appears thrown together and the lyrics often sound uninspired and self-consciously constricted. Likewise, many of the beats are overtly commercial, plain and don't seem to match his flow. Clearly the collaborative efforts of Wise, Father Shaheed and Culture Freedom are missed here; hopefully they'll soon re-emerge.

DAN McCLURE

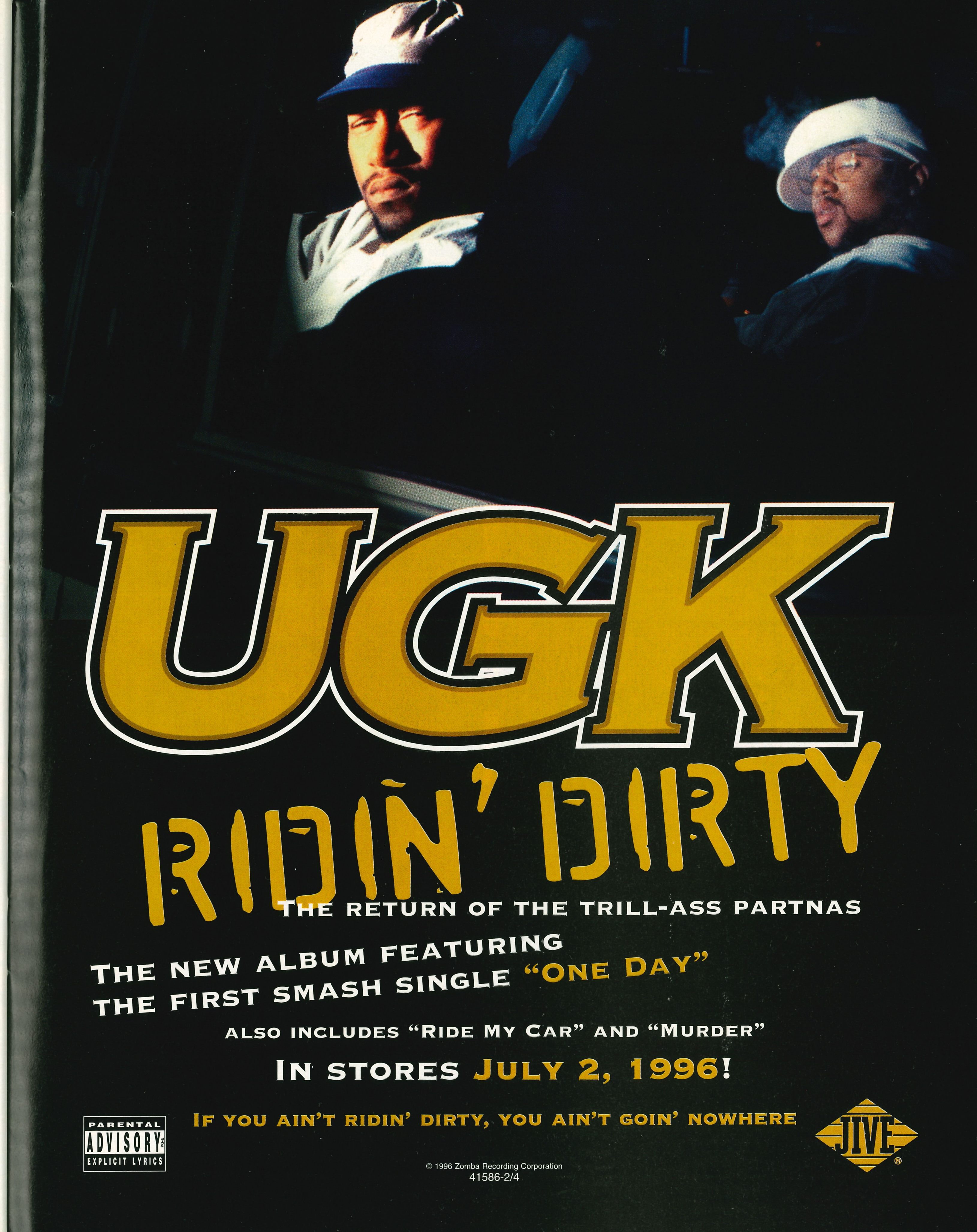
FACE MOB

The Other Side Of The Law

Rap-A-Lot/Noo Trybe Records

Production: Brad Jordan, John Bido, NO Joe

Having consistently consumed almost every "reality rap" artist that has graced a record store album bin, I now find myself asking: "When will it end?" Surely by now the entire hip-hop nation is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JIM BINDER

quite aware of exactly where and what goes on in "any ghetto USA" at least four times over. Be it Compton, Houston, Brooklyn, or Oakland, tales of how hard and testosterone-saturated a certain section of town may be are officially overdone. MCs playing show and tell with their 'hood is no longer of any interest, even with dope beats. The next crop of reality rap MCs have to now become artists, finding creative and innovative ways to distinguish their stories from the next former gang or drug affiliated inner-city griot.

Geto Boys sensation Scarface would seem an astute example for using innovative presentation as an approach to making a reality based album, but his pupils, Face Mob, don't quite hit the mark. *The Other Side Of The Law* is another "this is how it is in my 'hood album," one that lacks personality and presence. The four MCs Face gathered from four corners of the United State lack charisma and the knack for effective storytelling, as evidenced on "Bank Robbery." The lyrics don't convey drama or scenery, paling in comparison to prior lyrical bank heists—NWA's "Nobody Move" and Spice 1 s "Don t Ring The Alarm". Given that a large number of the post NWA and Geto Boy gangsta related artists have succeeded in getting over with top notch production, Face Mob's been-here-done-that content is even more painful in the face of sub-par tracks by perhaps the best production team in hip-hop. The music tries to be too eerie and comes off like a bad b-movie horror soundtrack; it just isn't as emotional, flavorful or head nodding as previous work from NO Joe, Scarface and John Bido.

"The Other Side," where the heavy bass and the bluesy chorus aid the vocal handicap of the MCs, is the album's best track. For the most part, *The Other Side Of The Law* is rather disappointing, especially without any verses from Scarface to help. Face Mob isn't wack, however, so it will be interesting to see what they bring the second time around.

ALLEN S. GORDON "THA EBONY CAT"

G-SHORTIES

44 Wayz
Stress Records
Production: artist

When most folks think about the sound coming out of Miami, predictable images usually come to mind: a honey shaped like a goddess shakin' her ass, deep, chest-rattling bass and somebody chanting some shit like, "don't stop get it, get it." However, this isn't the only sound that the bottom has to offer, a point proven by Miami based underground crew G-Shorties, who offer listeners a distinct alternative on their debut album *44 Wayz*.

44 Wayz incorporates various components of East and West Coast hip-hop. Musically, this crew displays some mob tracks that can be appreciated by those in Northern Cal; G-Funk tracks that would appeal to Southern Cal; and some rugged 808 drum beats that the East could get into. The group tends to focus on street stories and daily 'hood happenings, so their lyrical range lays somewhere between some pimp shit and the ever-popular gangsta ethic.

On "Let 'Em Have It," they manipulate a sample from the O'Jays cut "For the Love of Money" and put the "ass shakin'" stereotypes to rest. "Gangstas Cry Too" is a tribute to all of the dead homies, and reprimands those who forget to pour out a lil' liquor to the ones residing in the crossroads. "Southside" is one of those all too familiar "where I'm from" cuts that gets the thumbs up production wise. Other notables are "Click" and "Big Luck."

44 Wayz is definitely a solid effort, although it doesn't exactly break new ground. Still, this crew deserves a chance to be heard. And with the right degree of exposure, G-Shorties just may diversify the stereotyped perception heads have of Miami.

WESLEY K. MARSHALL

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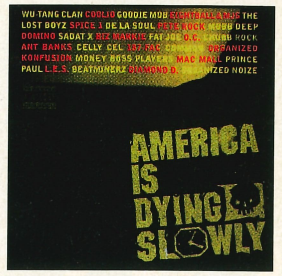
Men of Vizion
MJJ/Epic

With their self-titled debut album, Men Of Vizion lace us with thick production and lyrical game that yearns for unconditional love and role reversal done urban/pop style. "Discovered" by Teddy Riley, the Brooklyn bred and based quintet—Brian Deramus, Desmond Greggs, Corley Randolph, George Spencer and Spanky Williams—give us their best track first with "House Keeper." The subtle snares and heavy bass of this solid Teddy Riley/Spanky Williams production are laid with lyrics like, "How would you feel about it lady/ To be treated like queen/ I wouldn't hesitate to give you anything you need/ Cook your dinner/ Wash your clothes/ Give you a bath before you sleep/ I'm at your mercy." This winning formula, however tired and rigid it might be, is echoed throughout this New-Jack twang thang with tracks like "Only Just A Dream," "Joyride" and "Instant Love."

However, the spontaneous oral acrobatics that distinguish real soul music from the rehearsed, prone, crossover kind, are for the most part absent from this album. We can't front on the tingle we felt when Intro blessed us with that phat Stevie Wonder remake of "Ribbon In the Sky," or when Men of Vizion's label-mates, Brownstone, gracefully wailed "If You Love Me." There are simply too many fly-ass, innovative R&B groups out there, like Stepchild and the Society of Soul, for Men Of Vizion to come out with the same-ole'.

On the plus side, Men Of Vizion do possess much talent with the vocab and writing skills. However, their seeming desire to blow up like their label-head, Michael Jackson, seems to restrict their ability to unleash some serious flavor to the mix. It takes more than a minute to vibe with Men Of Vizion. And at the end of the day, the album is just above average. **RAQUEL CEPEDA**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AMERICA IS DYING SLOWLY

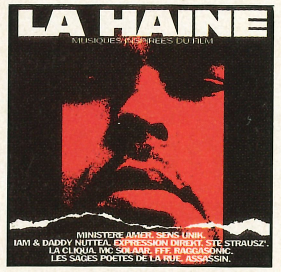
VARIOUS ARTISTS

America Is Dying Slowly
Elektra

Since the sudden loss of rapper Eazy-E to the AIDS virus, hip-hop has apparently awakened from its "I like it raw" stage and has gravitated toward the "stay protected" side of things. Aside from the many dangers of the virus itself, *America Is Dying Slowly* focuses on the other crummy aspects of urban life, including "Money" (Luniz, Dru Down), "Games" (Money Boss Playas) and "Nasty Hoes" (Sadat X & Fat Joe). All contribute solid efforts, but 8-Ball & MJG's "Listen To Me Now"—in which the two metaphorically play the role of the virus—is the wake-up call of this masterpiece.

RZA lets the dog loose when hip-hop's favorite icons return for another posse cut with the thought provoking "America." Killer Priest, RZA, Raekwon the Chef, Masta Killa and Inspectah Deck touch the topic of AIDS with a piano-meets-bassline track somewhat reminiscent of "Heaven and Hell" and "C.R.E.A.M." Hopefully Wu-Tang's massive influence on our generation will allow the message to get through.

Hip-hop's most underrated duo, Organized Konfusion, make a much needed appearance and proceed to mutilate the mic on "Decisions." Flow two tracks down and you'll find the third of the fudge pudge trio, OC, following the trend with "What I Represent." A large portion of this compilation is delivered by some of the underground's finest—including Mobb Deep, Common Sense, De La Soul and a duet by Biz Mark & Chubb Rock. Having an album with 90% underground hip-hop is a relief, considering you'll get top notch hip-hop from those who rarely share the spotlight with already tiring trends. While a few acts use this as a time to shine opportunity, most stick to the reason this album was made. Don't expect to hear any happy doody put-on-the-jimmy tunes, but anticipate a set of songs with more emotional meaning. Of the 13 tracks stuffed in this joint, at least one should hit home. WAKE UP!! **RIGOBERTO MORALES**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LA CLIQUA. MC SOLAAR. FFF. RAGGASONIC.
LES SAGES POETES DE LA RUE. ASSASSIN.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

La Haine Soundtrack
Delabel

As Mathieu Kassovitz's critically acclaimed film, *La Haine*, gives a verité look at French youths' angst toward police brutality (and their subsequent powerlessness in the face of it), the film also indirectly shouts the universality of the problem—invoking the same Rodney King/LA Rebellion images seen in the good ol' USA. The film's soundtrack continues that virulent, yet universal, cry, assembling some of France's most potent underground emcees and producers to chat down France's Babylon in a style and fashion that hip-hop heads in the US can definitely appreciate.

La Haine's emphasis on politically-tinged word-acrobatics atop thick, infectious production is enough to get things heated up, starting with the smoky, sonic breeze of FFF's "Le Vague A L'arme." This pulsing haze of urban dejection and disillusionment is the French-equivalent to Mary J's "My Life," with cosmically spiraling keyboards washing over a laid-back kick (replete with rim shots) and hypnotic back up vocals. It's one of the most complete attempts at funky R&B I've heard since D'Angelo. Ragga Sonic's dancehall gun-tale, "Sors Avec Ton Gun," has the familiar throbbing ragga-beat that folks from JA to Brooklyn rock to. Sens Unik's comment on psychotic hatred in "Le Vent Tourne" is reminiscent of the Jungle Brothers with its safari horn loop and thick, Hassan-chop drum track. Or if you crave a French-flip of the West Coast, there's Ministere Amer's "Sacrifice De Poulet," Iam & Daddy's "La 25eme Image," or Expression Direkt's "Dealer Pour Survive," with their low-riding tempo layered with winding OG synthesizers and smooth harmonies.

Even though *La Haine's* message, music and rhyme styles are nothing we in the states haven't heard, it is refreshing and empowering to hear hip-hop's aesthetics echoed from another shore and in another language. I would recommended it even if French rhymes sound all Greek to you. Hell, they did to me. **MARCUS REEVES**

SWV

New Beginning
RCA

Sisters With Voices follows up their highly successful debut, *It's About Time*, with a sophomore release entitled *New Beginning*. Although there is much love for the trio, the first single, "You're The One," may have left many wondering what's so "new" about them on the second go-round. Aside from the undeniably slamming production, the vocal styling, arrangement and lyrical content offered nothing new—catchy yes, but new, no.

However, just as a book can't be judged by it's cover, this album shouldn't be judged by the single. *New Beginning* offers the listener a much more comprehensive sense of this group's creative drive. SWV's writing abilities are proven on the ballad "Love Is So Amazing," penned by Taj; the seductive jam "I'm So In Love," by Coko; and the mellow groove "Don't Waste Your Time," written by Lelee and Faith Evans.

This time around the lead vocals of Tamara "Taj" Johnson and Leanne "Lelee" Lyons are also showcased. Taj does her thing on "It's All About You," while Lelee steps into the spotlight on the aforementioned "Don't Waste Your Time" and the title interlude, "*New Beginning.*" Taj and Lelee's debut as featured soloists adds dimension and helps define each of the members' contribution to the group's overall, distinctive sound. Other notable tracks include "Fine Time," which captures the emotional strain of being blinded by assumed love; "On & On," featuring Erick Sermon; and "That's What I'm Here For," featuring Digable Planets' Butterfly.

It's difficult to single out any one track because SWV has a song to fit every mood. To bluntly put it in their own words, the album is definitely "flexible, sexable, and some will say incredible." *New Beginning* earns SWV new respect. **TRACEY "T-NATURAL" TOOKS**

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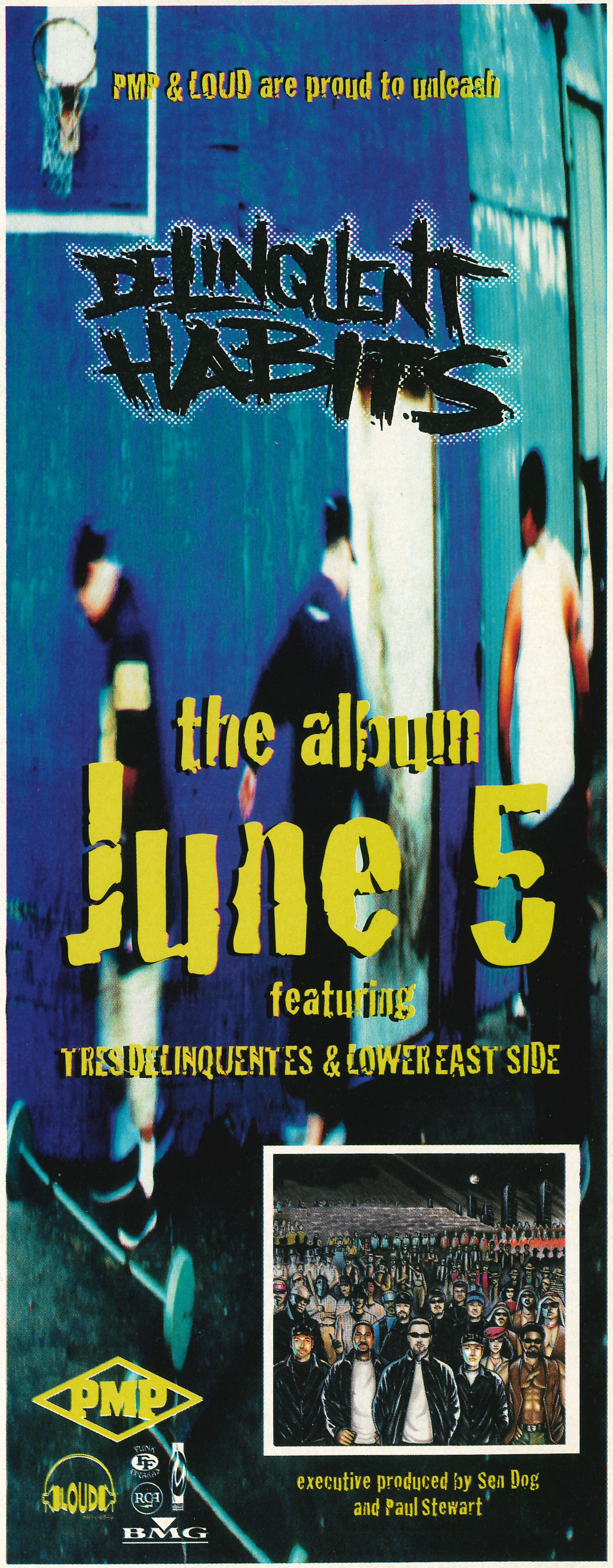
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WHODINI

"Keep Runnin' Back"
So So Def/Columbia
Production: Jermaine Dupri

Hip-hop sometimes makes surprising bedfellows. Case in point: "Keep Runnin' Back" teams one of rap's first platinum artists, Whodini—creators of such Old School classics as "Friends" and "Freaks Come Out at Night"—with Jermaine Dupri, the driving force behind the boards for Kris Kross and Da Brat, and himself one of rap's most consistent platinum artists. While most of the rappers of their day have long since vanished, Whodini actually had a slight hit in '94 when they teamed with PE's Terminator X on "It All Comes Down to the Money." This next single should result in even more success for these hip-hop originators.

"Keep Runnin' Back" is a cross between an Old School love jam and a patented Jermaine Dupri G-style funk track. Jalil and Ecstasy come with the same smooth and easy to understand flow as always, playing the role of players who've tried many females, but keep runnin' back to their one true love. The duo updates their vocabulary by using a lot of gangsta slang, but mix it up with lines like, "And these are the breaks like Kurtis Blow," that reveal their Old School roots.

Both versions of this track, the soulful original and the more G-funked remix, are designed for maximum radio airplay and should be inescapable come summertime. Whodini look to be back as strong as ever, thanks to the Midas Touch of Jermaine Dupri.

NICHOLAS POLUHOFF

ARTIFACTS

"Art Of Facts"
Big Beat
Production: Sean J-Period

The Artifacts have been excavated once again. Brick City's finest twosome—The Tame One and El the Sensei—have rematerialized in physical form to drop "Art of Facts," the first single off of their sophomore album.

Tame One kicks the first verse, showing why the duo has this game on lock: "With each beat released, I reach mad blocks/ Analyzing more spots then Matlock/ Now I got this rappin' shit on Padlock." El follows suit, warning wack MCs to be wary of the brick-hard steez the Artifacts come with: "I tear the roof off, and when I fuck, don't take my boots off/ I shoot from the lip and make your nose glow like Rudolph/ You soft, so let me hit you off with all the hardness/ Artifacts shit we got the hard shit regardless."

The production on the joint is hellatight, with a walking xylophone backed by a throbbing bass. The phat-ass drum line sports a heavy, car bumpin' bass drum that's accented by a rim shot. The chorus features a catchy moan/yelp that worms its way into the dome. The beat could use an occasional change-up, but the joint is still extremely tight overall and it shows that the Artifacts definitely got the art of facts mastered.

HAGOS A. MEHRETEAB

DIGITAL UNDERGROUND

"Oregano Flow"
Avex-Critique
Production: D-Flo Production Squad

After a few years in hiatus, Digital Underground has re-emerged on the hip-hop scene with a couple of changes. For starters, they're on a new label. And Shock G isn't just rhyming, he's singing!! Shock's tone falls somewhere between the carefree quality of an Erick Sermon and the polish of D'Angelo; weaving pleasantly throughout the joint in a surprisingly on-key manner.

Lyrically there are no disappointments. As always, Money B and Shock G melodically do their thing. It doesn't take a genius long to discover that the oregano referred to in the title is not your every day garden herb. Let's just say Digital Underground promises to "get you high off the soup." If the catchy chorus—"a little high belongs to you"—and the compatible marriage of these old school funkateers doesn't get you singing in the shower, the tracks of the two mixes will.

Who could forget the '80s Loose Ends classic "Hangin' On A String"? That sonic backdrop, combined with Shock G's singing, makes a perfect combination for the Radio Mix. The Hot Sauce Mix isn't exactly the McKinley brand I'm used to, but it does keep your foot thumping with its funkadelic, pulsating bass.

With "a dab of this and a dab of that, and not too heavy on the garlic," Digital serves up memories of hip-hop's pioneering elements: fun and entertainment. So if you're interested in a good time or some funky gravy for the next party, grab a seat, marinate and "just get high off the soup."

APRIL FERRI

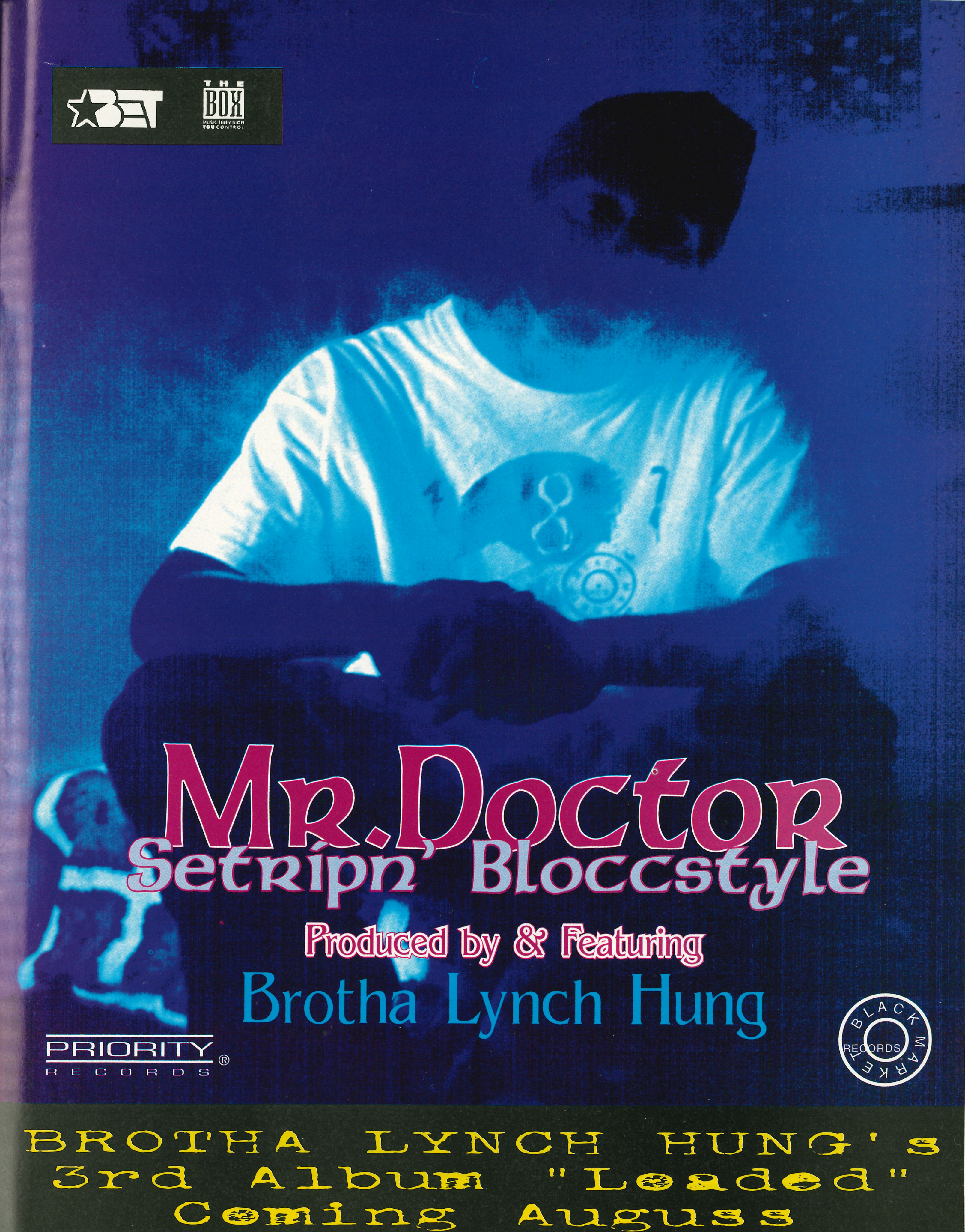
THE ROOTS

"Clones" b/w "Section"
Geffen
Production: Grand Negaz, Kelo Saunders

Sometimes you wish hip-hop could be distilled to a simple equation: talent = success. Unfortunately, it ain't that clear-cut. Case in point: an incredibly talented group outta Illadelphia puts together a debut work that receives great critical acclaim, but generates no commercial explosions. Any fool knows that the Roots measure 10 plus on the hip-hop Richter (guess that makes the general public a bunch of geniuses). But if there's a great arbiter of hip-hop fairness, the second time around may prove to be the charm for Black Thought, Malik B and co.

"Clones" and "Sections" are clear indications of the direction in which the crew seems to be headed. Musically, they've eased back from the live band feel in favor of a more conventional sound. And both joints come with much more of a lyrical edge than most Roots faithful may be accustomed to, particularly "Clones"—which also features capable wordplay from M.A.R.S and Dice Raw. While Malik B has always had a penchant for flipping on niggas, Black Thought could usually be found developing complex verbalistics on varied subjects ["Silent Treatment," etc.]. It's too early—and probably incorrect—to say that the Roots are retreating from their original steelo, but they rip through this first single and leave a pointed mission statement on the brain: we are fucking dope MCs.

AJUKE HAMIT



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"GETTIN' IT"	TOO SHORT JIVE
"HUSTLER'S THEME"	SMOOTHE DA HUSTLER PROFILE
"HANG 'EM HIGH"	SADAT X LOUD
"IT'S A PARTY"	BUSTA RHYMES ELEKTRA
"SCARRED"	LUKE POLYGRAM
"STAKES IS HIGH"	DE LA SOUL TOMMY BOY
"PAIN"	BLAHZAY BLAHZAY MERCURY
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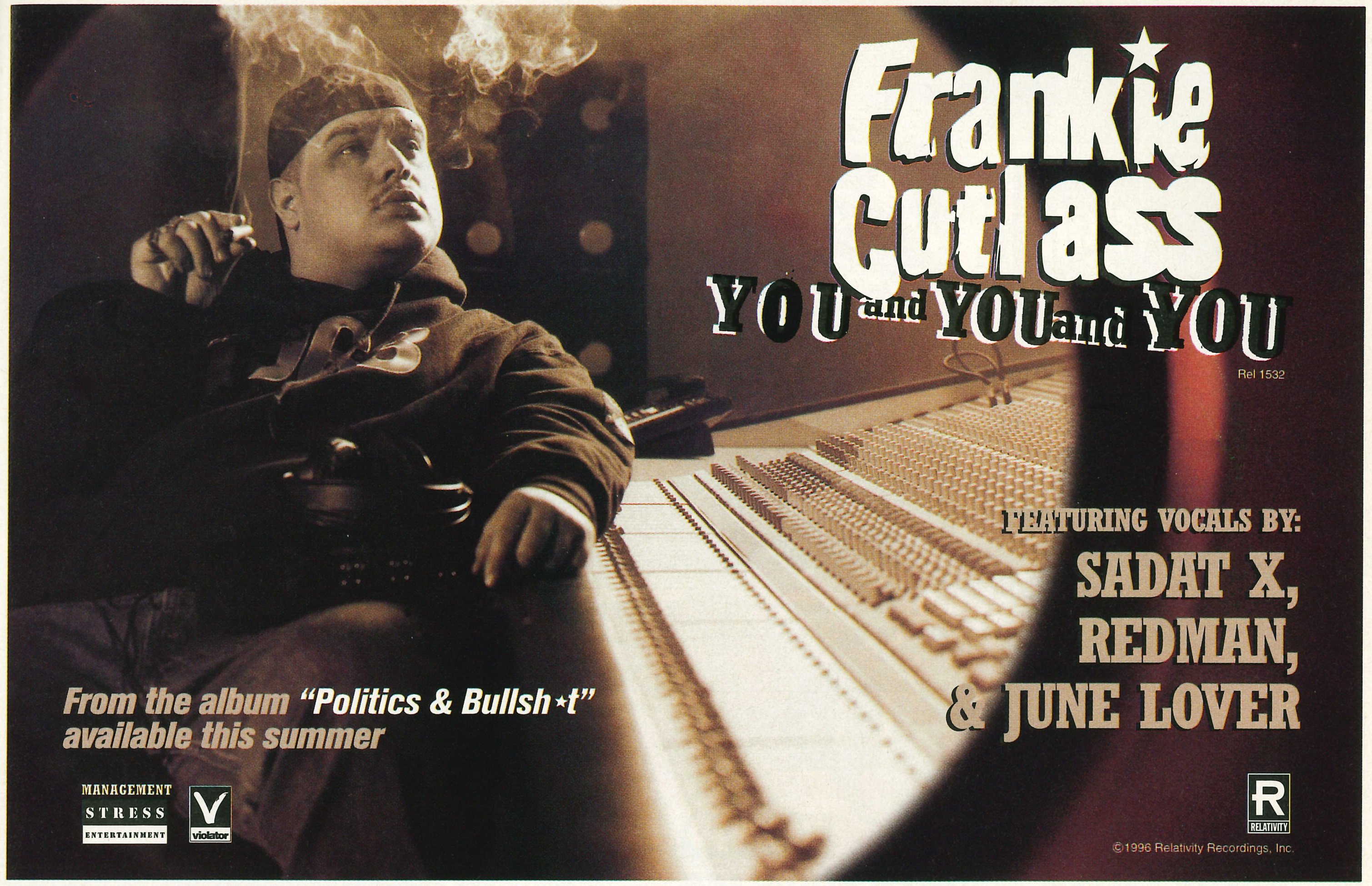
"YOU, YOU AND YOU"	FRANKIE CUTLASS RELATIVITY
"CROSSROADS"	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY RUTHLESS
"1NCE AGAIN"	TRIBE CALLED QUEST JIVE
"CLONES"	THE ROOTS GEFFEN
"THE WORLD IS A GHETTO"	GETO BOYS RAP-A-LOT

SNEAK PREVIEWS

ARTIST	ALBUM TITLE	TENTATIVE RELEASE DATE
NAS	*IT WAS WRITTEN*	JULY 2
WRECKX-N-EFFECT	*RAP'S NEW GENERATION*	JULY 2
SADAT X	*WILD COWBOYS*	JULY 14
ABOVE THE LAW	*TIME WILL REVEAL*	JULY 16
REAL LIVE	*THE TURNAROUND*	JULY 16
DIGITAL UNDERGROUND	*FUTURE RHYTHM*	MID-JULY
A TRIBE CALLED QUEST	*BEATS, RHYMES AND LIFE*	JULY 30
OUTKAST	*ATLIENS*	LATE JULY
OGC	*DA STORM*	LATE JULY
BLAHZAY BLAHZAY	*BLAH, BLAH, BLAH*	LATE JULY
WHODINI	*SIX*	EARLY AUGUST
DA BRAT	*UNTITLED*	EARLY AUGUST
MOBB DEEP	*UNTITLED*	MID-AUGUST
THE ROOTS	*ILLEDELPH/ALFLIFE VOL.3*	LATE AUGUST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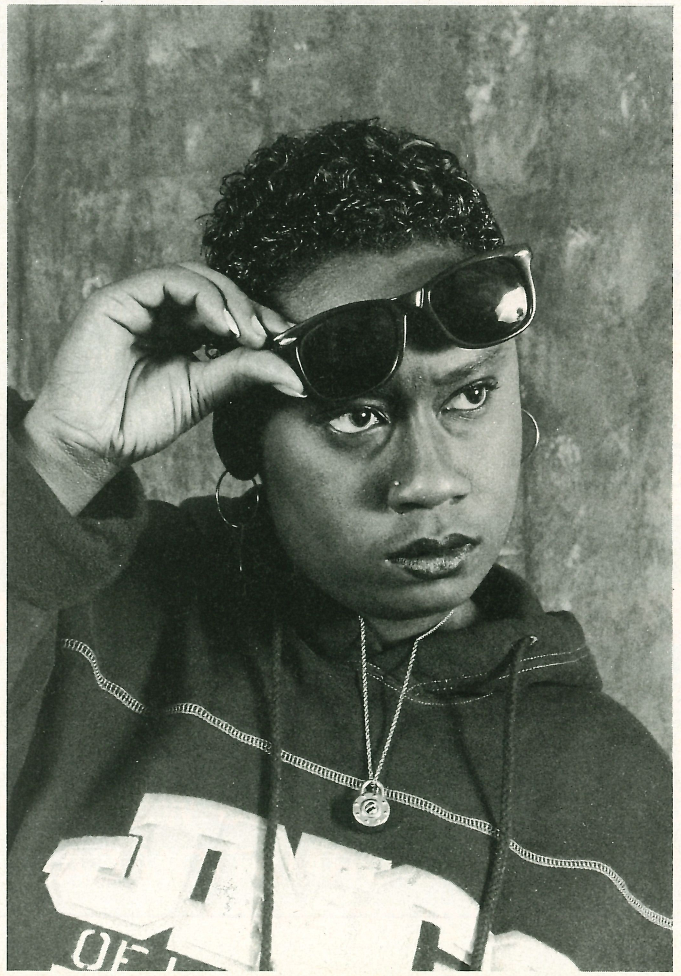
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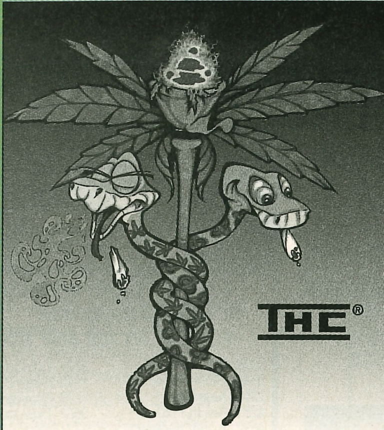

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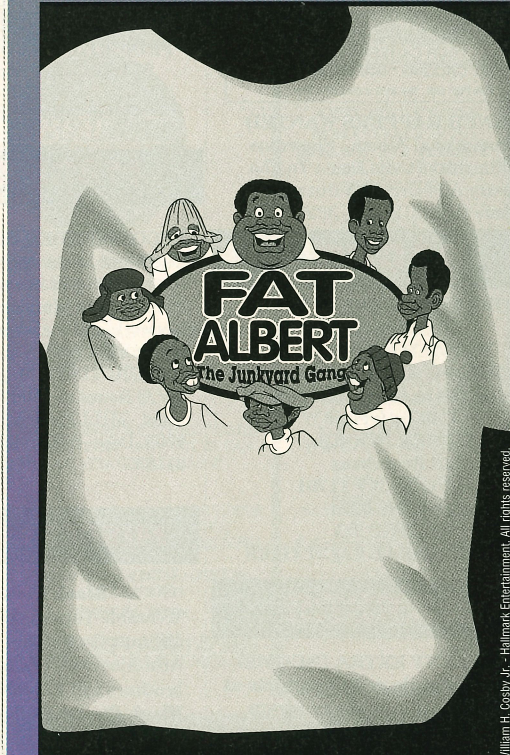

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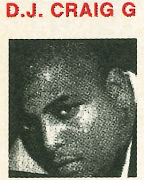
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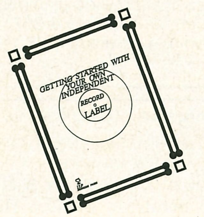
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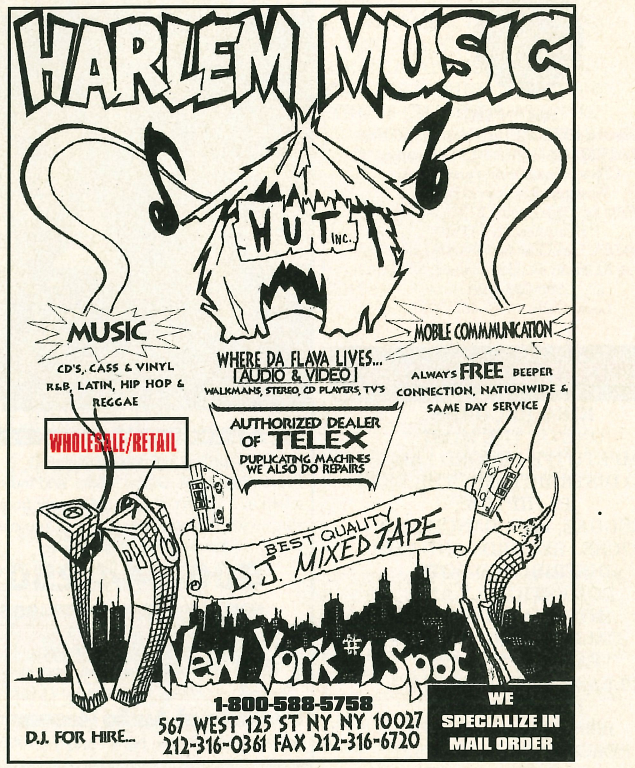
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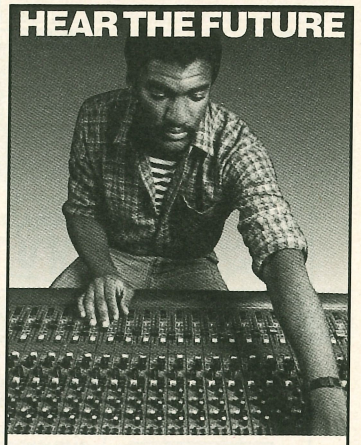

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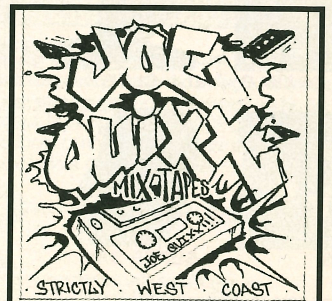

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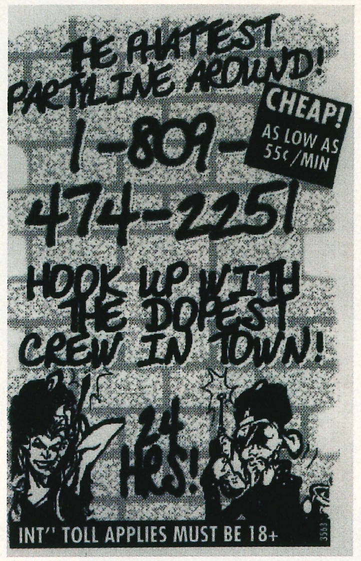

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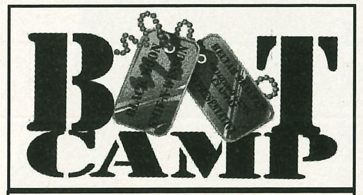

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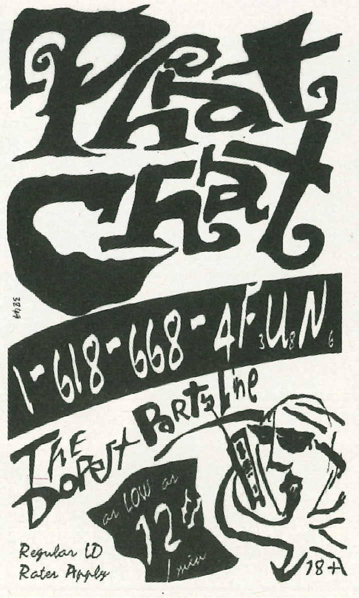

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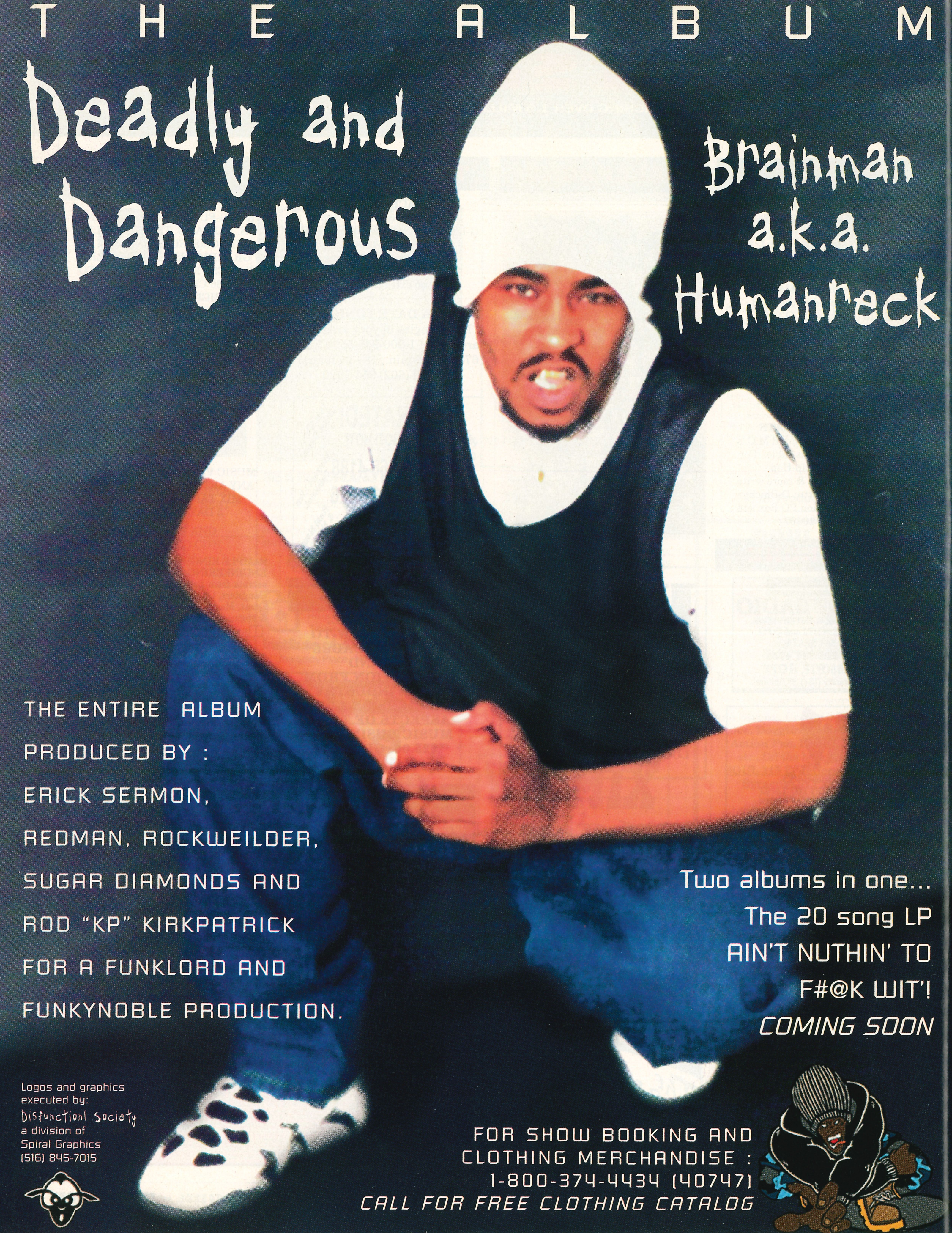
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1

NITRO

2

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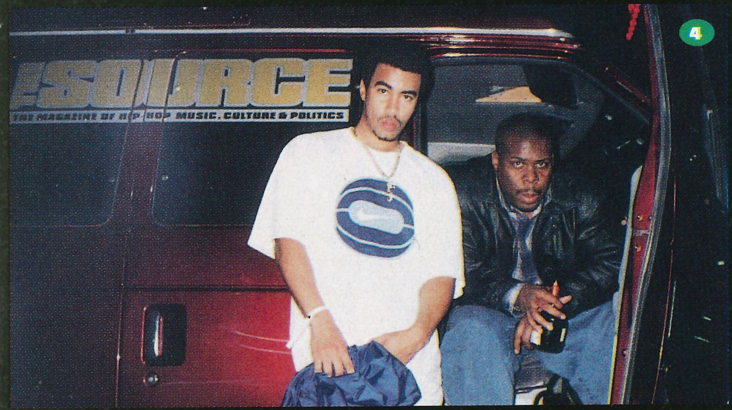
NITRO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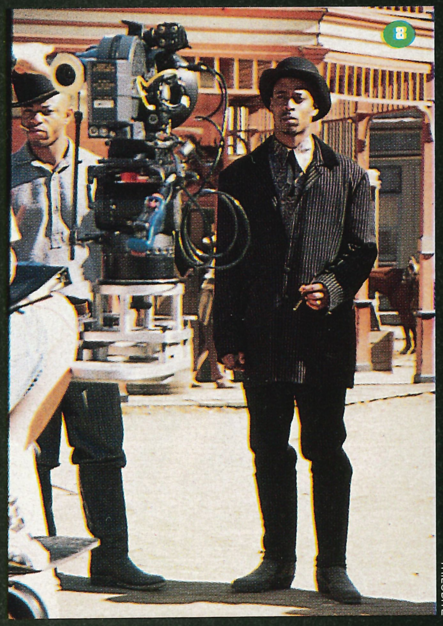
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9. Kurious, Lost Boyz and Shabazz do some politicking in D.C. 10. The Geto Boys resurrect themselves in a Detroit record store. 11. Sharing common thoughts: Common Sense and Black Thought. 12. From shorty's to men: Shyheim and Jamal. 13. Is this how a multi-platinum artist spends his earnings? Coolio on swerve. . . 14. Is Heather B. the most beautifullest thing in Keith Murray's life? 15. Above The Law shows support for their homie, Yella, at his album release party at LA's Club Flex.

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DEREK BLAZER

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SANDRA ROSE

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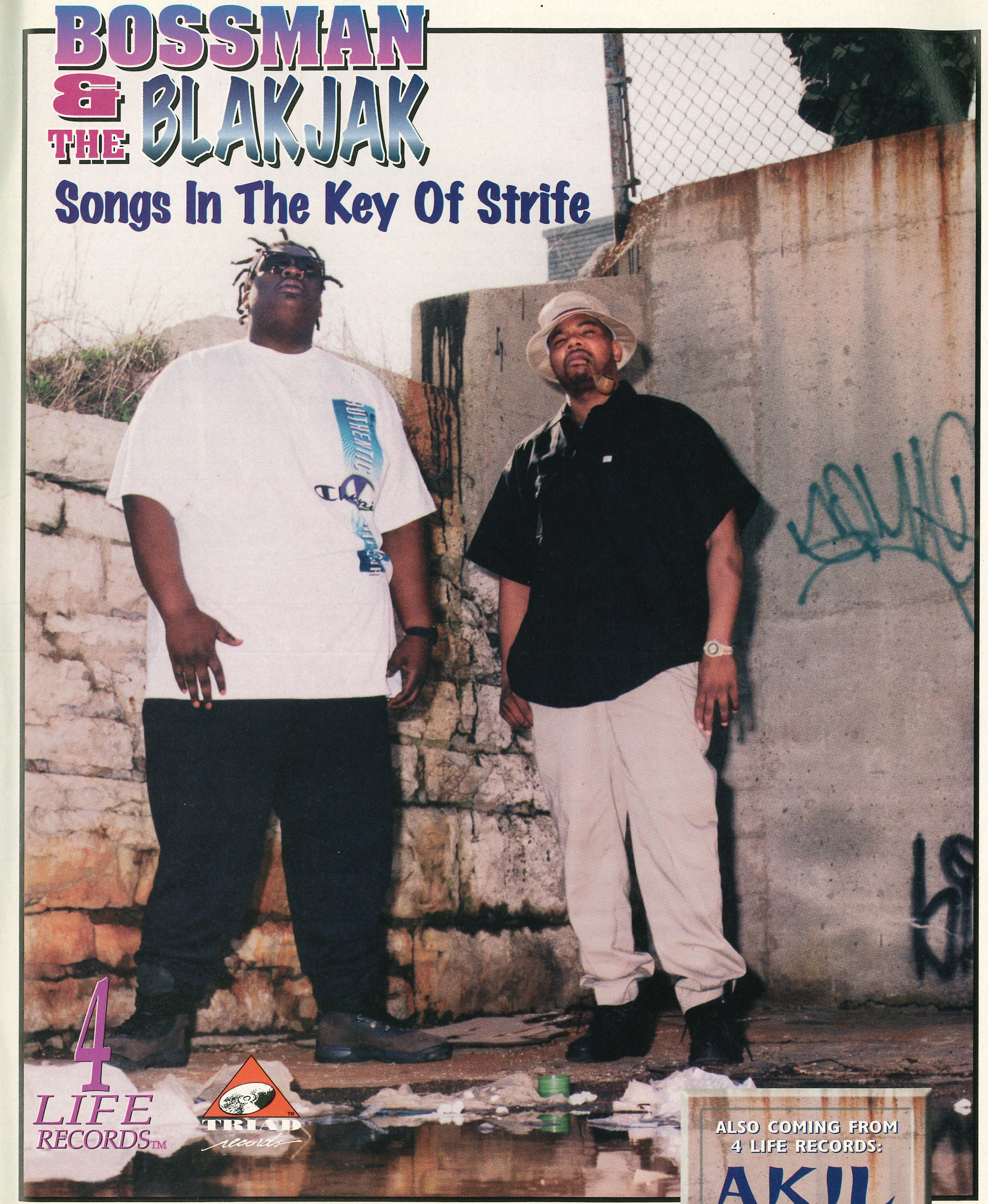
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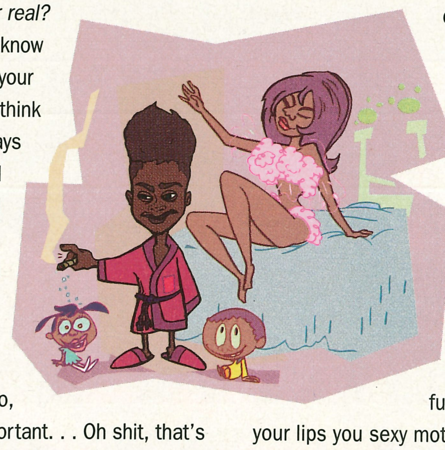
reality check

BY CBU DWL

STICK WITH YOUR MAN, BOO, 'CAUSE I'M NOT THE JOKE. HE'LL LOVE YOU ALL DAY BUT I'LL SEX YOU DEAD BROKE. HE'LL GIVE YOU MAD FUN LIKE HOMEY THE BIG CLOWN. BUT I'M ON SOME NEW SH*T AND I'LL RUN YOUR KICK'S DOWN.

T**his one goes out** to all playa haters, tricks, marks and spineless boyfriends who think shit is all lovely back at home with wifey. . . The stories you are about to read are true, only the names have been changed to protect my chances of second visits on future booty calls.

Case #1: Thursday, 3:05, after school. I'm heading over to this little dime shorty's rest piece. As usual, I'm not invited. It doesn't matter who's home with her because what I have in mind will only take about three minutes to accomplish and the only space that I'll need is a broom closet or stairway. . . I knock on the door. *What do you want, Buc?* "Kelly, please hold me, boo, I'm scared." *What's wrong?* "It's those MOBB DEEP kids, they're after me again." *What did you do, Buc*? "I can't go into all that right now, just hold me, I'm so scared. Is there some place we can be alone?" She takes me to her little brother's room. Before she can say anything I say to her: "Listen boo, in case those kids do get a hold of me and put me in cement shoes like they said they would I want you to have my original Wu-Tang tour jacket that Ghost Face Killer gave me, all you have to do is contact my sister Tosha; she knows where I keep my stash." *For real?* "Absolutely!! Now listen to me baby girl, I been thinking. I know we've had mad problems in the past and I'm sorry I had your man jumped four times, but I want to make it up to you. I think it's time that I went down on you, boo. I know I've always said that I wouldn't eat anything that bled for two days and didn't die but this could be my last day in the physical form and I want it to be special. Please don't deny me, boo; just lay back. . . Are those the new Victoria Secrets you got on? You always do be rockin' some fly shit, you go, girl. I'm about to get busy with this tongue action real soon, but first just let me put on this raincoat and loosen that shit up a bit." (Three minutes later) "Yo, hold up, boo, that's my beeper. Let me see who that is, it could be important. . . Oh shit, that's those MOBB DEEP kids, let me call them right quick. Yo Havoc, what up, son? What did you say? Everything is squashed, all right cool. I'll call you later. Look here baby girl, I gotta run around my way and tell everyone it was all a big misunderstanding and everything is squashed, I'll be right back." *But what about that tongue action, boo?* "Oh yeah, I'm gonna take care of that shit as soon as I get back baby, just keep it warm for me." This is the sympathy technique. I only recommend it for people who have convincing straight faces and fresh hair cuts.



Case #2: Saturday afternoon at 2:00 PM. I'm riding my brand new PARKPRE freestyle bike, smoking some new Hydro shit and practicing my bunny hops when I see this pretty older-woman waiting for the bus with her two kids. I check my manual for women over twenty-five then move in for the kill. "Excuse me miss, but do you need a father figure for those kids?" She looks at me with a grin and says, *Why would you think that, little man?* "Well, no disrespect miss, but you've got on last year's Perry Ellis jacket and your jeans are mad faded. Now I'm no genius, but I would guess that your man is either locked up and you're out here in the world all alone or he's just not on his job, which means you're up with the kids all day, leaving no time for your self. Either way, I think I could be of some assistance in your times of need." Right about now Miss lady started laughing which told me that my chance of running through that ass was about 80/20. *Could you be more specific, little man*, she says. "Well miss, around my way I'm known as the plumber and my specialty is laying strong pipe." She stared me dead in the eye for ten seconds and said nothing. To make a long story short, her kids now call me Uncle Buc and on Monday afternoons I can be found walking around Miss lady's house butt naked wearing some nigga's satin bathrobe. . . This case dealt with the Genesis technique. I recommend it only for those who have a lot of confidence and a strong back.

The Marathon Technique: It's called the marathon because if it works on the subject you can keep it going for a long time with out really having to prove anything and the sexual rewards are endless. Example: You're standing around and this dime piece is headed your way. "Excuse me miss, but did you see LL Cool J come through here in a white Lexus coupe? I was supposed to meet him here but I'm a little late..." Nine times out of ten they will stop just to see who you are. That's when you tell them, "Yeah, my name is Rondell. I'm Biggie Smalls' little nephew and I'm coming out on Bad Boy real soon." If she smiles for half a second, getting the number should be no problem. The rest is up to you.

The Scorpion Technique: It's called the Scorpion because if it works it leaves them paralyzed and sprung at the same time. Example: You see the subject and you approach her in a quick motion. With an angry look on your face you say to her, "I don't give a fuck if Mike Tyson is your man, I'll kick his ass just to taste your lips you sexy motherfucker." I recommend this technique only when you're out doors and a few of your friends are with you, just in case honey dip decides to take you up on the offer and her man is some cock diesel kid who might be standing near.

My brother Star says you can judge a man's power by the actions of his girl. With that in mind I have dedicated my life to testing and harassing all shorty's of the world to see who the real playas are and who is just a plain old mark. See Ya next month!!!

P.S. I am presently working on Hip-Hop Makeovers for a future Reality Check and I figured I'd let a few people get in on some of the fun. Please send all suggestions for your favorite artist to me right away at the address below.

Buc Wild writes a monthly column in Around The Way Connections magazine. You can write to Buc Wild c/o Around The Way, 824 St. Johns Pl., Brooklyn, NY 11216

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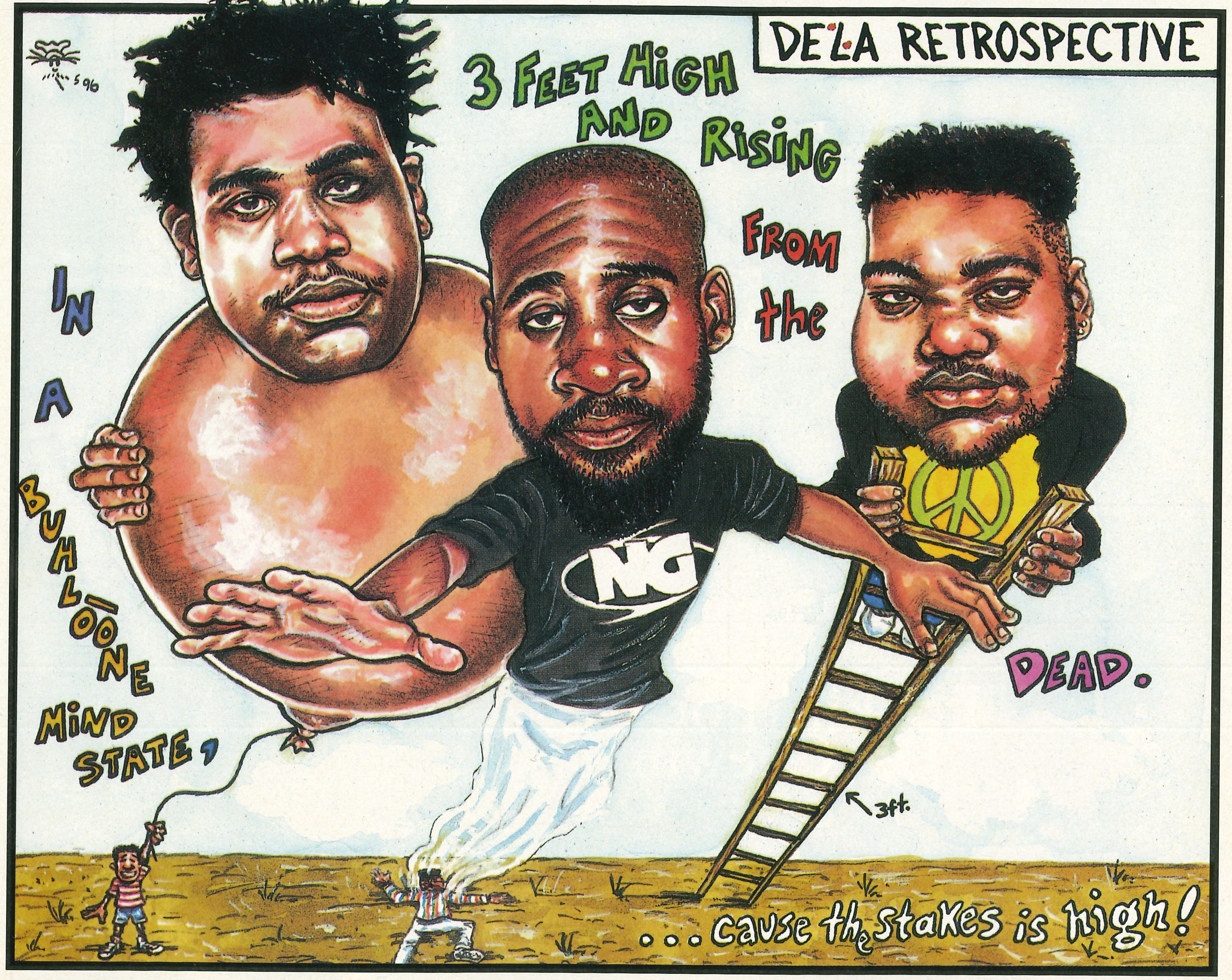
THE LAST WORD

BY ANDRE LEROY DAVIS



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...cause the stakes is high!

COMING AT YOU IN AUGUST

WHODINI

When the hip-hop concert documentary *The Show* showcased an old school roundtable, it included all the well-known legends of the era like Bambaataa and the Furious Five. But what stood out was the presence of Whodini, once the genre-bending group of hip-hop, who chronologically defy the title of old school. Because of their mastery of the artform, they have earned their place among the greats. Now with a breath of new life courtesy of Jermaine Dupri, Ecstasy, Jalil and Grandmaster D get to test their formula of smoothed-out hip-hop on the '90s generation.

THE SOURCE SPORTS AT THE OLYMPICS

After much anticipation and preparation in Atlanta, the Olympics have finally reached America. These multi-national tests of skill and endurance will no doubt feature some of our most talented athletes from the streets. As always, THE SOURCE will be there to give you the scoop like no one else can!

NAS

The second coming of the MC was the title Nas was expected to live up to on his debut effort—an arduous task, to be sure. Yet waiting in the wings is a no less daunting outing: assembling a successful sophomore album. Next month we'll interact with the Queensbridge native and attempt to discover what makes the 'hood go round in the mind of a not-quite-average young Black man.

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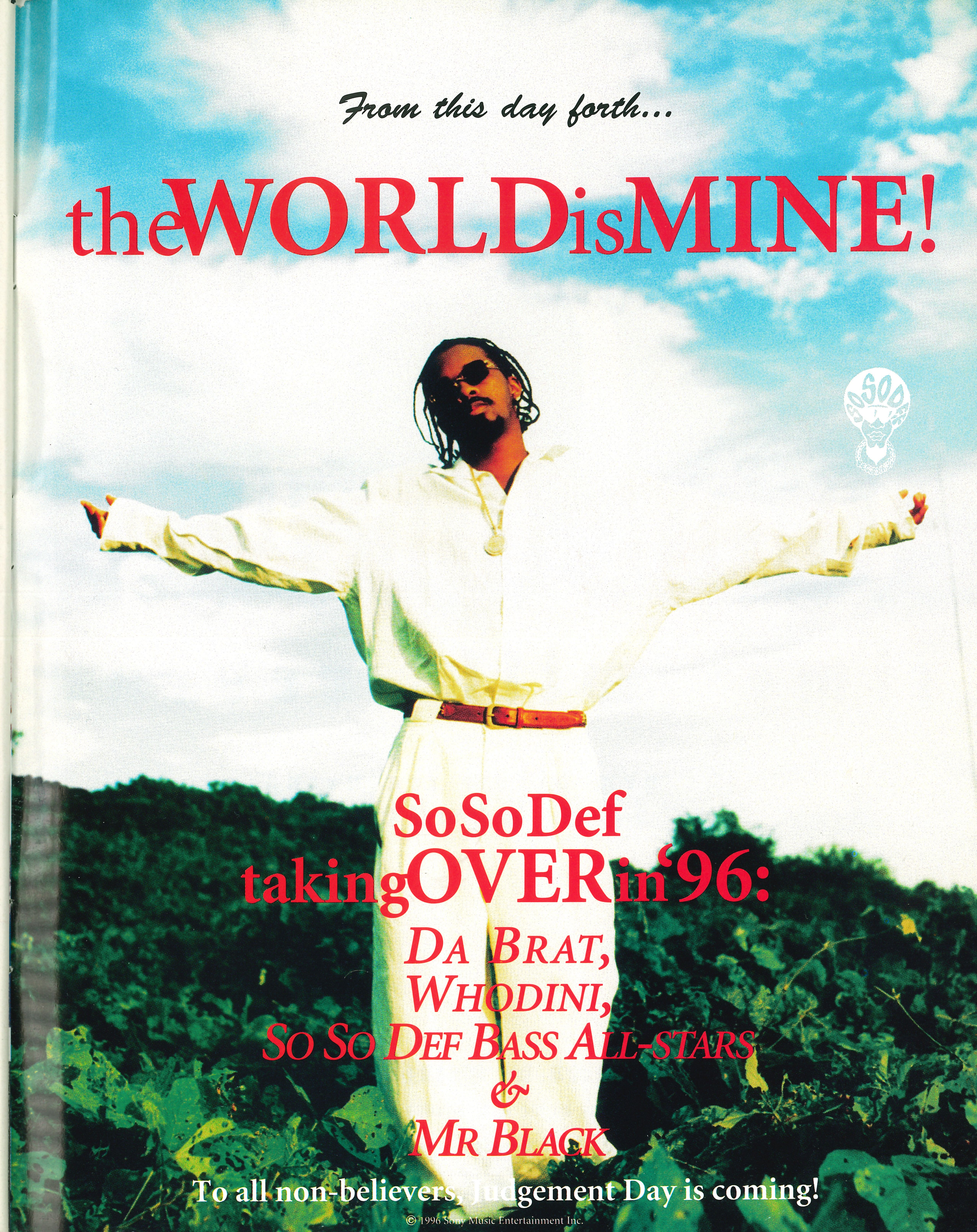

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